

Exegetical Notes – Isaiah 1:10-20

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(The first five chapters of the Book of Isaiah are indictments against the people of Judah because they have abandoned YHWH and failed to follow His commands. As we enter the season of Advent 2022, the time when we prepare for the birth of our Savior, we will examine the first indictment against Judah. Hopefully, the ancient words of the Prophet Isaiah will help us rededicate ourselves to YHWH and His word.)

Verse 10

***¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom;
listen to the instruction of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!***

- YHWH calls on His people to listen to His instructions.
- Sodom and Gomorrah are two evil places that rebelled against God's law and were punished for it with destruction (see Genesis 15:1-29). God uses the names of these places to address His people to indicate that they are like those two evil cities. The implication is that the people of God are in the same danger of divine judgment as were Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verses 11-12

***¹¹ "The multitude of your sacrifices—
what are they to me?" says the LORD.
"I have more than enough of burnt offerings,
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;
I have no pleasure
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.
¹² When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?"***

- The people of God make more than the required number of burnt sacrifices in God's Temple. They come to the temple in large numbers at the appointed times. They appear to be doing what God requires. But their hearts are not in sync with their actions. God is unhappy with them because their outward devotion to Him does not affect the way they live.

Verses 13-14

¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings!

Your incense is detestable to me.

New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—

I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

¹⁴ Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals

I hate with all my being.

They have become a burden to me;

I am weary of bearing them.

- The required incense offerings are being made. The required gatherings are being kept. But these things are a burden to God because the people's hearts are not in them. Their outward devotion to Him does not affect the way they live.

Verses 15-17

¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer,

I hide my eyes from you;

even when you offer many prayers,

I am not listening.

Your hands are full of blood!

¹⁶ Wash and make yourselves clean.

Take your evil deeds out of my sight;

stop doing wrong.

- God says that He will not listen to the prayers of His people because their hands are full of blood. Their moral character offends Him! They are treating the innocent unjustly.
- God instructs them to make themselves clean by washing their hands. They are to stop doing wrong. They must change their behavior. As a nation, they must repent.

Verse 17

¹⁷ Learn to do right; seek justice.

Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless;

plead the case of the widow.

- To please God, His people must do what is right according to His word, the Bible. Religious activity without living the word of God is meaningless.

Verses 18-20

**¹⁸ “Come now, let us settle the matter,”
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.**

**¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the land;**

**²⁰ but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword.”**

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

- YHWH calls His people to settle this matter with Him. If His people repent, there is still time for them to escape destruction.
- Though their transgressions are many, if they are willing to repent, to change their hearts and live God’s word, they will still enjoy His blessings.
- But if they insist in following anything other than His word, they will be judged and their nation will cease to exist.
- YHWH has spoken! There is no higher court to which His people can appeal. Their choice will determine their future. Nothing can change it. (It is important to note that neither Israel, the northern Kingdom, nor Judah, the southern kingdom listened to the word YHWH spoke. Neither repented. Both continued to ignore the word of God, and both fell to the sword.)

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