

Exegetical Notes – Isaiah 1:2-9

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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 2a

Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth!

For the LORD has spoken:

- YHWH calls on the heavens and the earth to listen to His complaint about His people. All nature is called to listen to what YHWH says and to stand as the judges of God's people.
- YHWH has spoken clearly. The meaning of His words is certain. Based on what He has said, nature will render judgment on His people.

Verses 2b-3

***"I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.***

***³The ox knows its master,
the donkey its owner's manger,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand."***

- God says that His children have rebelled against Him.
- The rebellion is unnatural. The ox knows his master. The donkey knows that his owner feeds him. This is the natural order. But Israel, the whole people of God including both the northern kingdom, Israel, and the southern kingdom, Judah, have rejected their Master, YHWH. They rejected the natural order. Therefore, YHWH appeals to nature to judge them.

Verse 4

***⁴ Woe to the sinful nation,
a people whose guilt is great,
a brood of evildoers,
children given to corruption!
They have forsaken the LORD;
they have spurned the Holy One of Israel
and turned their backs on him.***

- The people who should follow YHWH are evil doers because they do not follow the word of their Master. Israel, the whole people of God, is corrupt. They no longer listen to Him nor do they follow Him. YHWH's word no longer guides them. They know better than God.

Verses 5-7

***⁵ Why should you be beaten anymore?
Why do you persist in rebellion?
Your whole head is injured,
your whole heart afflicted.
⁶ From the sole of your foot to the top of your head
there is no soundness—
only wounds and welts
and open sores,
not cleansed or bandaged
or soothed with olive oil.
⁷ Your country is desolate,
your cities burned with fire;
your fields are being stripped by foreigners
right before you,
laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.***

- The people of God have been punished for their rebellion. They bear the wounds of YHWH's punishment. The wounds of God's correction are visible and unhealed. The people suffer from the wounding which was sent to correct them. But the spanking has not worked.
- Those outside of Israel have taken advantage of her. She is laid waste by strangers.

Verses 8-9

⁸ *Daughter Zion is left*

*like a shelter in a vineyard,
like a hut in a cucumber field,
like a city under siege.*

⁹ *Unless the LORD Almighty*

*had left us some survivors,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.*

- What remains of Zion, the people once blessed by YHWH, is like a “shelter in a vineyard” or a “hut in a cucumber field.” These are both temporary structures. They are quickly built and left abandoned. They have no lasting value.
- Zion is a “city under siege.” Great and destructive forces move against her. Her future is like the temporary shelter or the hut.
- Sodom and Gomorrah are ancient cities that were destroyed because they were entirely morally corrupt (see Genesis 13:13, 18:20-21, 19:5-25). Israel survives only because God is merciful. Had YHWH not been patient, Israel would already be gone.

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