

ISAIAH

Chapter 1

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Ch 1 Isaiah's messages are not arranged in strictly chronological order (e.g., compare 1:1 with 6:1–13). Ch 1 introduces two topics elaborated in all subsequent chapters: (1) God's wrath consumes impenitent sinners, and (2) God's mercy offers penitent sinners redemption and salvation. Both threat and promise are backed by "the Holy One of Israel" (v 4). (TLSB)

1:1–31 Compare the indictment of ch. 1 with that of ch. 5; the two enclose the first series of oracles. Ch. 1 also serves as an introduction to the whole book.

But this whole prophecy is summed up above all in three parts, namely, the prediction of the coming captivity in Babylonia, secondly, the return from this captivity, and thirdly, what it says about Christ. (Luther)

1:1 vision. In the sense of "revelation" or "prophecy" (see 1Sa 3:1; Pr 29:18; Ob 1).

God supernaturally revealed these things to Isaiah, showing coming events in light of His eternal plan of salvation (cf 2:1; 13:1). (TLSB)

None of the prophets imagined these visions; they came from God. Isaiah records the details of one of his visions in chapter 6. God gave him others. In this opening verse Isaiah introduces the entire collection of those visions. They all came from God, who wished to communicate to his people what was on His mind and heart. As we begin our study of Isaiah some 2700 years later, we trust it is a message from God, just as Peter said, "Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). We believe it is God's inspired Word. (PBC)

We correctly explain a vision as a prophecy, for the prophets used to be called "seers" (1 Sam. 9:9), certainly a word denoting weakness and humility, as if the prophet were saying: "I come to proclaim the things I have seen." Thus Christ says (John 3:11): "We bear witness to what we have seen." The prophet sees; the people hear. (Luther)

Isaiah – Isaiah son of Amoz is often thought of as the greatest of the writing prophets. His name means "The LORD saves." He was a contemporary of Amos, Hosea and Micah, beginning his ministry in 740 B.C., the year King Uzziah died. According to an unsubstantiated Jewish tradition (*The Ascension of Isaiah*), he was sawed in half during the reign of Manasseh (cf. Heb 11:37). Isaiah was married and had at least two sons, Shear-Jashub (7:3) and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:3). He probably spent most of his life in Jerusalem, enjoying his greatest influence under King Hezekiah (see 37:1–2). (CSB)

Isaiah. Hbr nouns comprising this name suggest his calling to proclaim the Lord's salvation. Amoz. Not the prophet Amos. We do not know Isaiah's ancestry; far more important than his background is what the vision enabled and compelled him to say. Judah and Jerusalem. Area

remaining loyal to Davidic dynasty after Solomon's death when northern tribes seceded (two centuries before Isaiah). Isaiah saw the role Judah and Jerusalem were to play in God's plan of salvation. days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Kings who reigned during Isaiah's ministry (Uzziah [792–740], Jotham [750–735], Ahaz [735–715], Hezekiah [715–686]). In these years, Judah and Israel were at their peak of power, prosperity, and territorial expansion. Only David and Solomon's reigns were greater. (TLSB)

Isaiah wrote during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the decline of Israel. Under King Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.) the Assyrians swept westward into Aram (Syria) and Canaan. About 733 the kings of Aram and Israel tried to pressure Ahaz king of Judah into joining a coalition against Assyria. Ahaz chose instead to ask Tiglath-Pileser for help, a decision condemned by Isaiah. Assyria did assist Judah and conquered the northern kingdom in 722–721. This made Judah even more vulnerable, and in 701 King Sennacherib of Assyria threatened Jerusalem itself. The godly King Hezekiah prayed earnestly, and Isaiah predicted that God would force the Assyrians to withdraw from the city.

Nevertheless Isaiah warned Judah that her sin would bring captivity at the hands of Babylon. The visit of the Babylonian king's envoys to Hezekiah set the stage for this prediction. Although the fall of Jerusalem would not take place until 586 B.C., Isaiah foresees the demise of Judah and proceeds to predict the restoration of the people from captivity. God would redeem his people from Babylon just as he rescued them from Egypt. Isaiah predicts the rise of Cyrus the Persian, who would unite the Medes and Persians and conquer Babylon in 539. The decree of Cyrus would allow the Jews to return home in 538, a deliverance that prefigured the greater salvation from sin through Christ

One of Isaiah's favorite techniques is personification. The sun and moon are ashamed, while the desert and parched land rejoice and the mountains and forests burst into song. The trees "clap their hands." A favorite figure is the vineyard, which represents Israel. Treading the winepress is a picture of judgment, and to drink God's "cup of wrath" is to stagger under his punishment. Isaiah uses the name "Rock" to describe God, and animals such as Leviathan and Rahab represent nations.

Amos. Not to be confused with the prophet Amos. (CSB)

Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. These kings reigned from 792 to 686 B.C. None of the kings of Israel is mentioned since Isaiah ministered primarily to the southern kingdom (Judah). (CSB)

Uzziah – His 52 year reign had been marked by prosperity and national accomplishment. Uzziah's ambitious building projects no doubt fostered national pride, as well as boosting the economy. Uzziah's agricultural policies no doubt insured a plentiful food supply and put many unskilled laborers to work. Even Uzziah's military exploits probably proved popular. For one thing, Judah marched away from her battles in victory, not defeat. For another, the tribute Uzziah extorted from those he defeated in battle would have helped moderate the tax rate at home. So flags flew high in Judah as long as Uzziah sat on David's throne. (LL)

But prosperity has its hazards, hazards perhaps more treacherous than adversity. In times of adversity, at least we keep ourselves alert. We focus on the dangers we face, dangers that are for the most part external ones. (LL)

Uzziah began to believe his own publicity. While the 16 year-old Uzziah”did what was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father Amaziah had done,” the prosperity the Lord gave Judah during his reign awakened the monster pride that had lain unnoticed, dormant inside the king’s heart. Then one day as the Scriptures tell us, “After Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense” (2 Chron. 26:16). He found himself struck with leprosy. For the rest of his earthly life he suffered the lonely consequences of his mad scheme to grab more honor and power for himself. (LL)

But in times of prosperity we often let down our guard. We tend to lose touch with the internal conditions of the heart. And that subtle hazard has proven deadly time and again down through history – for king, as well as for us more common folk. (LL)

Jotham – Chronicles 27:1-5, “Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother’s name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. ² He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD. The people, however, continued their corrupt practices. ³ Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple of the LORD and did extensive work on the wall at the hill of Ophel. ⁴ He built towns in the Judean hills and forts and towers in the wooded areas. ⁵ Jotham made war on the king of the Ammonites and conquered them. That year the Ammonites paid him a hundred talents of silver, ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand cors of barley. The Ammonites brought him the same amount also in the second and third years.

Ahaz – 2 Chronicles 28:1-5, “Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. ² He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and also made cast idols for worshipping the Baals. ³ He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his sons in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. ⁴ He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree. ⁵ Therefore the LORD his God handed him over to the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his people as prisoners and brought them to Damascus.”

Hezekiah – 2 Chronicles 29:1-2, “Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother’s name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. ² He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.”

Assyria – A New Super Power – During Uzziah’s long reign, the political landscape of the world had undergone drastic change. Most notable among those changes was the rise of Assyria, the new super-power of that era. (LL)

Assyria did more than strut back and forth in the region, rattling its swords. The approach Assyria took to warfare permanently changed the delicate balance of power in the area and chilled the hearts of everyone who lived within striking distance. (LL)

Until then, enemy armies would march to the borders of a presumably weaker kingdom, threaten that kingdom’s ruler, and demand tribute. Those who were able or willing to pay escaped harm. Those who could not afford to pay the tribute or who thought they could defeat the attacking enemy would march off to war to defend their right to keep their wealth. (LL)

The Assyrians changed all that. They put in place a program of permanent conquest. They would round up the populations they defeated and herd nearly all the people off for a permanent resettlement in another part of their far-flung empire. Then they would import other captives to resettle the conquered territory. (LL)

How frightening it must have been for the people of a little nation like Judah to face the possible loss of their homes, possessions, culture, and perhaps even their language and their identity as a people. Imagine yourself being captured by an invading army and then resettled in a village somewhere in the heart of Mongolia. Imagine living with the terror and sadness of the thought that neither you nor the members of your family would ever make it home again. The people of Judah found themselves staring into the teeth of that kind of threat. (LL)

Enter Isaiah. Isaiah the prophet who by God's grace saw the true dangers Judah faced. Isaiah who saw the sins of the past, the spiritual dry rot of the present and the judgment that loomed large on the horizon of the future. (LL)

The Wickedness of Judah

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." 4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. 5 Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. 7 Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. 9 If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. 10 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11 "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. 12 "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? 13 Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, 17 learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. 18 "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 like crimson, they shall become like wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

1:2 Isaiah begins and ends (66:24) with a condemnation of those who rebel against God. The prophet calls on heaven and earth to testify to the truth of God's accusation against Israel and the

rightness of his judgment—since they were witnesses of his covenant (see Dt 30:19; 31:28; 32:1). (CSB)

hear, O heavens! And give ear O earth – Israel is summoned to stand trial in a covenant lawsuit. God calls heaven and earth as witnesses (cf Dt 4:26; 30:19). He summons creation to testify (Dt 32:1; Ps 50:4) because it witnessed the critical events. (TLSB)

The Song of Moses in Deut 32 begins similarly. The content is also similar to that of Isaiah's initial utterance. It reminds Israel of God's many kind deeds, censures Israel's apostasy and ingratitude, threatens punishment, exile, rejection, but then closes with reference to the grace and redemption of the NT. (Stoekhardt)

This is an imitation of Moses (of. Deut. 32:1) and an intense and fiery exclamation and appeal. For Isaiah is an exceedingly eloquent prophet, endowed with a rich supply of words; he is a man who speaks with great earnestness. But this is Scripture's way: first to terrify, to reveal sins, to bring on the recognition of oneself, to humble hearts. Then, when they have been driven to despair, its second office follows, namely, the buoying up and consolation of consciences, the promises. This is how the Holy Spirit teaches. Satan, on the other hand, worms his way in by means of sweet speeches and flattering words until he infects innocent hearts. Then he leaves behind horrible terror and despair without consolation. For this reason the prophet, speaking in the Holy Spirit, moves in on the people with a loud and powerful exclamation. If anybody could ponder the individual emotions, he would see in each word a furnace and intense heat. Not just anyone can interpret the feelings of the prophets, but one must teach with the aid of the Spirit. The prophet calls on heaven and earth to hear, not to understand but to be witnesses. Do not interpret heaven to mean angels and earth to mean men, but know that this is a way of speaking to make the hearers pay attention; as if to say: "Nobody is listening; everybody is ungodly." Therefore let heaven and earth hear. Why this? Because the Lord is speaking, and He is worthy to be heard. Furthermore, while the Lord is speaking, there follows the speech to which nobody listens except him who is of God; as He says (John 8:47): "He who is of God hears the words of God." Therefore wherever it is written: "The Lord speaks," it is immediately indicated who the hearers are, namely, only those who are of God. The others do not hear, even though you shout more than 600 times. And this is said chiefly against the show-off saints, not against those gross sinners. Look at the history. Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah were praiseworthy kings. Under them Isaiah prophesied, and he censured them as sinners in order to comfort them afterwards. Ahaz alone was ungodly. He undoubtedly came from a line of godly kings. The family was godly, and there were many godly subjects. Yet even in their praiseworthy realm the prophet found room for such rebuking. This could justly be done even today, so full of evil is everything. When, therefore, there is no one who listens, or only very few, the prophet is forced to speak either into the wind or to those who listen. Of these, however, there are two kinds: some are carnal and gross sinners; others listen spiritually and by means of a new faith want to rule over souls with their own righteous deeds, opinions, and inventions. It is the latter who are censured here. What, then, does the Lord say? (Luther)

Early in Israel's existence God set forth rules that would be helpful for Israel to live in harmony with God and each other. One of those was that one witness was never enough but that there needed to be two or three witness before serious punishment was inflicted. The following passages give examples right through the NT.

Deuteronomy 17:6, "On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness."

Matthew 18:16, “But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’”

2 Corinthians 13:1-2, “This will be my third visit to you. “Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”² I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others’

1 Timothy 5:19, “Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.”

Isaiah called the heavens and earth to bear witness to God’s complaint. By God’s powerful word, the heavens and earth came into existence. The host of heaven – the stars, sun, and moon – serve as witnesses to all human history, and together with the hills, valleys, and seas, they have quietly endured human history. If the heavens and earth could talk, they would share the story of God’s promise to Abraham to make of him a great nation. Over the course of history God had made Abraham’s descendants a great nation in Egypt and brought them to the land He promised. The hills had silently watched God give Israel victory over her enemies; the stars had been there when Solomon erected the temple. God had reared His children and made them great. With this solemn and eloquent invocation, the prophet reminded His people of all God had done for them. (PBC)

Why call on the heavens and earth? Human vision is limited by a lifetime. Psalm 90 reminds us that men and women are swept away in the sleep of death. The psalmist reminds us that like grass, we sprout in the morning only to become dry and withered by evening. The heavens and earth outlive generation upon generation. Although they too will end, they stand as “eye witnesses” to God’s grace and mercy to His children. The heaven and earth verify the truth God announced. The Scriptures invoke the heavens and earth as witnesses on other occasions. Moses called to them in Deuteronomy chapter 32, and Micah chapter 6 recorded God’s appeal to them. The truth of what God was about to say was not lost in the rise and disappearance of generations. No! It stretches beyond the generations. (PBC)

Children have I reared and brought up – They were children not just because of creation, but because God redeemed them from Egypt (Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1). (TLSB)

God has done nothing but good to His people. Israel is God’s firstborn son. (Ex.4:22) The Israelites are God’s children. (Deut 14:1; 32:20) God is Israel’s Father, who formed and established it. (Deut 32:6, 18) In Egypt the family of Jacob grew to become a nation. This is regarded the birth of the Jewish nation. God has begotten Israel. That seed of Abraham became a nation in a foreign country was the work of God. And these children God multiplied. In a miraculous way He multiplied this people and dispersed them throughout the Promised Land. The period during which Israel multiplied in Egypt amid severe oppression was, as it were, Israel’s childhood. It spent the time of its youth in the wilderness. And in Canaan it matured to manhood. But God also gave this people dignity, that is, He raised it to a position of might, glory, and prestige. Here we think especially of the era of David and Solomon. All that God had from the beginning done to His people, all the blessings that Israel received from God, including the spiritual, that God had given it the Law, the promise, and had instituted proper divine worship, are included under these two expressions. (Stoekhardt)

This is a reproach for ingratitude and blindness beyond measure. The words are certainly powerful; for He does not say: “I have received a people for Myself; I have assembled Israel.”

No, He says: “Sons have I reared, etc.” It is as if He were saying: “I have omitted nothing. There is nothing I have not shown. I wanted to be their Father. I chose them to be My children. And not only this, but also I brought them up; that is, I bestowed on this people all fatherly blessings, care, protection, a very great increase in number, etc.” Look at the histories. (Luther)

they have rebelled against me – By rejecting God’s ways despite His blessings (Dt 32:6, 18, 20). A disobedient child deserved death (Ex 21:15, 17). (TLSB)

The verb “pasha be” means to break with someone, to tear oneself away from someone, to deal faithlessly with someone. Apostasy (breaking from the faith – CBD) from God: that is the basic character of Israel’s history from the days of Solomon on. (Stoeckhardt)

That is a flagrant instance of the basest ingratitude. The pain such behavior has caused the Father is clearly indicated. (LL)

That is, “They have deserted Me; they have withdrawn from Me; and though exalted by Me, they have dropped their excrement into My hand.” The world treats us in the same way, no matter how much we have done for it. Whoever wishes to live in the world and desires to imitate God, his Father, should expect from the world the same treatment that God receives. Accordingly, He says: “I have bestowed many favors on them. But they turn away from Me and go elsewhere. They blaspheme Me, and the very things with which I attract them to worship Me they prefer to misuse for the purpose of wickedness.” This is a description of the world. (Luther)

1:3 *ox knows its owner* – Animals are intelligent enough to recognize that their owner provides for them, but God’s people lacked this basic wisdom. Luther: “They think they know everything, and the prophet calls their wisdom and knowledge sheer stupidity and ignorance” (AE 16:9). (TLSB)

This summarizes the seriousness of the problem. A barnyard animal as ignorant as an ox knows its master – the person who feeds, waters, and otherwise cares for it. A donkey, less intelligent, at least knows its manger and where to come for food each night. But Israel? Israel knows ... knows ... what? The Hebrew sentence simply ends. It ends without a direct object to complete the thought of the verb. Israel knows ... nothing. As we might say today, Israel just doesn’t get it. The people have chosen to ignore the truth, and so they will pay the consequences. (LL)

The truth hurts! First it hurts Israel’s Father and Lord. He speaks as the heavenly Father concerned about His dear children. He complains that animals know their owners and masters but Judah and Jerusalem do not know Him. The contrast between oxen and Israel and between donkeys and “my people” heightens the painful truth. Animals without intelligence know more than God’s own people. God here appears as a deeply grieved father. In spite of all He has done, His children don’t know, understand, or appreciate His love and mercy. (PBC)

Among the Hebrews verbs in the past tense are explained as being in the present tense, provided that nothing interferes. And this is the praise of our wisdom and our free will. In the preceding verse our righteousness and sanctity were praised, which is the height of ingratitude and blasphemy, and with this ungodliness those who want to be most saintly exert themselves above all. Now it is shown what the light of our intellect is, when we are so confounded that no one dares to lift up his eyes when he sees an ox or an ass approaching him. Is it not a great thing that an ass should be compared, yes, preferred to us—an ass that knows where it is looking and betakes itself to the house of its master? Would we not rightly bare our heads before the ass and greet it as our teacher? Therefore it is still proper to say to us: “You are an uncouth ass and more uncouth than an ass.” When the Hebrews speak of the manner of having possession, they often

use the word בַּעַל, which means master, husband, or lord. Baal of the sword, for instance, means one who owns a sword. Thus the “masters crib” means the crib that belongs to its lord and to him who owns the ass. (Luther)

crib. Feeding trough. (CSB)

does not know. Refusal to know and understand God later resulted in Judah’s exile from her land (5:13). (CSB)

Apostasy is abominable ingratitude. Israel ought to have been able to recognize its Lord and God. But no, it did not know God and, and it does not want to know anything about Him. Its behavior is inhuman, below that of an animal. (Stoekhardt)

Here the Lord certainly speaks plainly, for He should rather have said: “My people are foolish. They have no knowledge or understanding. They are more stupid than an ox and an ass. But what will happen?” “My people,” He says at another time, “are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge.... And since you have forgotten the Law of your God, etc.” (Hos. 4:6). Here, therefore, you understand what is the wisdom and godliness of men who depart from God. Certainly there is nothing they think they do not know. He who would call them ignorant would be very hard of hearing. But here the prophet proceeds especially against those very people and says that they are more uncouth than an ass. Nevertheless, they think they know everything, and the prophet calls their wisdom and knowledge sheer stupidity and ignorance. But is it not foolhardy so to open the mouth and rail at the saintly people and condemn their wisdom and light? But who listened to this? No one except him who was of God. He confesses and deprecates his guilt in terror. Other hearts are not touched. The fact that because of the word “crib” this passage is applied to the birth of Christ is an error we can put up with, since it does not conflict with the faith; it is a childish mistake and one that flows from piety. “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him” (Rom. 14:1). The stubborn must be resisted. Christ bore with the apostles even when they erred in the faith, but not with those who erred persistently. Augustine says: “It will be possible for me to err, but I will not be a heretic.” (Luther)

1:4 offspring of evildoers. Sinful parents bear sinful children. The children repeat the same sinful corruption that plagued their parents. (TLSB)

God’s bitter lament over Israel has grown to a complaint against His people. This complaint is now spelled out in detail. It is a sevenfold (spiritual complete number) woes (woe is a warning that judgment is coming – Is. 6:5; Eze 34:2; Mt. 18:7; 23:13; Jude 11) that the Lord utters concerning His people. (Stoekhardt)

1. **AH SINFUL NATION (WOE UNTO THE SINFUL NATION-KJV)** – Israel was to be a holy nation. But it has become sinful through and through. It is going astray. It has forsaken the right way and missed the mark. (Stoekhardt)
2. **A PEOPLE LOADED WITH GUILT** – The literal translation means a perversion of justice, of divine justice, iniquity, and involves the concept of guilt. Israel is weighed down with guilt, iniquity, and so burdened with iniquity. The one who carries a heavy burden becomes himself all the more burdened. (Stoekhardt)
3. **BROOD OF EVIL DOERS** – How the holy seed has changed its spots. (Stoekhardt)
4. **CHILDREN GIVEN TO CORRUPTION** – They were to have been children of God, and so they were. Now they are children who deal in corruption and are themselves corrupted. (Stoekhardt)

To these four interjections are attached three affirmative propositions. The perfect tenses state what they have done and what, as far as they are concerned, has become habitual. (Stoeckhardt)

5. THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD – They are far from God. This is inner backsliding, the decline of conviction. (Stoeckhardt)
6. THEY HAVE SPURNED THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL – God is the unblemished Pure One, exalted over sin and world. He has chosen Israel in order to reveal His holiness to it, in order to sanctify this people to Himself. But the Israelites scorn and mock the Holy One of Israel. (Stoeckhardt)
7. AND TURNED THEIR BACKS ON HIM – In their actions and behavior they likewise have turned away from God and are now going their own way, the wrong way. (Stoeckhardt)

Holy One of Israel. Occurs 26 times in Isaiah (see especially 5:24) and only 6 times elsewhere in the OT. (CSB)

The idea of holiness implies something that is separate and unique. God is holy. He is without sin, powerful, and far above everything human. Humans approach Him with reverence and awe: consider Isaiah's reaction to this Holy One in chapter 6. But this Holy One has an fathomable love for His creatures. This God is all goodness, love, and kindness, blessing, and salvation – everything that is different from fallen humanity. He reaches out to bridge the difference between Himself and His fallen creatures – a wide gap that separated a holy God from His sinful creatures. Fallen humanity cannot bridge the difference by any thought or action. But God, the Holy One of Israel, acts to bring all those blessings to unholy humanity through the plan of salvation. (PBC)

Rejecting God and rebelling against Him are always serious matters. So is the judgment announced here. Make no mistake, the Lord has spoken. But who listens when the Lord speaks? We do well to perk up our ears every time God speaks. It is all too easy to take God's message for granted. God must call us to repentance regularly (Luther – “The entire life of believers is to be one of repentance.”), lest our perverse sinful nature lead us to forsake and reject all He has done for us. His goal is always to keep us as His own. Even when His words are harsh, He still loves us. As our heavenly Father, He has made us, has redeemed us, and calls us together to spread the message of His love. As we listen to His Word, He will sustain us as His people at this time in history and will give us strength to carry out His will. (PBC)

Some interpret this as meaning: “Oh, how sinful this nation is!”⁹ But give heed to the ability of the prophet; he strips those people of every mask. Above he said that they were ungodly and foolish; now he robs them of the glory because of which they boasted of being the people of God, a holy nation, a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), the seed of Abraham, the children of God whom He led out of Egypt and to whom He gave the Law. All this the prophet overturns and says that they are indeed a nation, but a sinful one which ought to have been holy, a people chosen indeed by God and one that ought to be borne up above the stars but now lies on the ground crushed with sins. Therefore their god and prince is the devil. A seed they are indeed, but an evil one and of evil parentage, not of godly Abraham. Children they are indeed, but of corrupt parents, not of God; sons of the damned, not of salvation, whose every effort is directed toward evil. This, you see, is the distinction of the Jews and of the ungodly among us too. Certainly they were not all like this; yet the great majority were, and they were involved in both gross and internal sins to such an extent that they did not accept the rebuke, namely, that they are lost and hopeless people who must be chastised by the executioner, since they refuse to be chastised by their Father. But this is their sin. (Luther)

They have forsaken the Lord. That is to say, this strength of theirs has departed from the true worship of God, namely, from faith and love. Indeed, they have even forsaken the external form of worship prescribed to them and have brought sacrifices on the mountaintops. They have not feared God; but, what is more serious, they have blasphemed Him and fought against Him, and they have not only departed from obedience to Him. And such things are said against a holy people under excellent kings. If the prophet were here, what would he say to us thoroughly wicked people? After they had forsaken the faith, they invented one religion and one opinion of faith after the other. This always happens, and for that counterfeit faith they rage against the true prophets and blaspheme in them the true Word of God. For together with the Word of God sects that blaspheme the Word always arise, and thus there is always a battle with the Word of God and against the truth. Peter says (2 Peter 2:2): “Because of them they have reviled the way of truth.” (Luther)

The Holy One of Israel, namely, for whose worship Israel was chosen and sanctified by Him. Therefore the prophet calls Him holy on the basis of what He effects. Our Holy One is Christ, who sanctifies us through the Word of truth. Yet many attack this true and only sanctification with another sanctity that is counterfeit and false. A pig is led unwillingly to a bath because it thinks this is mud. On the other hand, it is willing to go into mud because it considers this a bath. Thus the wicked sectarians abhor the truth because they are delighted by lies. (Luther)

They are utterly estranged. *הִרְבּוּ*; that is, they have drawn away, have separated and consecrated themselves, have sanctified themselves for something. He means, therefore, that the Jews have sanctified themselves in reverse; that is, they are sanctified by someone else than God, who is the “Holy One of Israel,” that they praise some new holiness, namely, the devil’s, that is, mud, pigs. And thus he deprives them of all glory. (Luther)

1:5–6† The condition of Israel is transferred to the suffering servant in 53:4–5. The Hebrew words for “beaten,” “injured” and “welts” correspond to those for “smitten,” “infirmities” and “wounds.” (CSB)

1:5 *why will you still be struck down* – The Father of Israel – that is, the Lord Jehovah – was exasperated by His people. He disciplined His rebellious people as a father disciplines a wayward child. But the discipline has only confirmed their behavior instead of correcting it. God’s children hardened themselves even more in their rebellion. What a difference between this discipline and the discipline God administered to His people during the time of the judges. Back then when the people turned away from God, He sent an enemy to chastise them. When they realized their sin, they prayed to the Lord for deliverance, and He sent them deliverance. Such was the pattern of the judges. But Judah was past that stage. Now they did not turn to the Lord when He sent them affliction. (PBC)

The heavenly Father questions the effectiveness of sending difficulty. He asks, “Why should you be beaten anymore?” The spiritual condition of His children was repulsive. Wounds had not been cleansed and bandaged. They festered. The discipline God sent had not driven them to their knees or turned them away from sin. This was not what the Lord wanted. When He sent healing and comfort to His people through the prophets, they rejected it. Instead, they remained pitiful and stubborn. (PBC)

How do we respond to the Lord’s discipline? God still corrects His children by discipline; He does it for our good. But discipline in the form of trouble and affliction is not a means of grace. It does not strengthen faith. Instead, it causes us to pause and think. Believers learn to despair of

help except in God. They turn to Him in prayer and rejoice in the message of His Word. Then the Holy Spirit through the Word strengthens, comforts, and sustains. He speaks to us in His Word and gives us healing and comfort there. Such is God's plan. (PBC)

This is another rebuke, namely, that they are utterly hardened and incorrigible, even though they have been punished. And this annoys God most. When the ungodly are punished, they turn this to their own advantage as praise of martyrdom or of holiness. This is what God complains about through the prophet. It is as if He were saying: "Whether I chastise you by means of words or with blows, you always add deceit and are hardened against Me by those very blows." The scourges are turned into a strengthening of ungodliness. Therefore the final scourge must come, namely, death itself, which will put an end not only to their prevarications but also to their ungodliness and to the false righteousness which they appropriate to themselves because of suffering the blows which are inflicted more because of their sins. What, then, will be the way to proceed? With what cure will I help you? If I add blows to words, you become more impenitent, stubborn, and hardened. Promises do not soften you. Threats do not frighten you. Blows do not reform you. These are hard hearts. Gross sinners can certainly be reformed, at least with punishments, because they acknowledge that they are stricken for sins which they cannot deny. But saintlets and spiritual sinners cannot be reformed; for they do not acknowledge their sins and therefore do not think that they are being punished on account of sins. Ahaz was stricken much and often, but for this reason he worshiped strange gods much more, especially the gods of the Syrians, because he saw their prosperity. Thus when a blow threatens, our people run more quickly from one place and another rather than to God, and they increase their sins, although they imagine they are seeking pardon. This is what we read in Jeremiah (44:17 ff.). There is a proverb which states: "While fools shun faults, they run into the opposite fault." (Luther)

Ephesians 4:30, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

Hebrews 12:7, "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?"

head...heart – Judah suffers collectively and individually. Sin is no minor problem; it affects the entire being. (TLSB)

The whole body, the entire nation, head and heart, outwardly and inwardly, is sick, sore, and faint from the many blows it has already received from God account of its sins. More on this in verse 6. (Stoekhardt)

1:6 *no soundness*. Illness and injury are metaphors for sin. Spiritually, the nation resembled a person beaten to a pulp and wounded from head to foot (cf Dt 28:35), but who would not seek healing. (TLSB)

The disease ravages the entire body, as with Job (2:7). (CSB)

In the body politic as a unit, from head to toe, there is nothing hale and sound, simply wounds and stripes and fresh blows to be found in the nation as whole. The singular of these nouns is meant collectively. WOUNDS are lacerations, gaping wounds, as from the slash of a sword that require stitches. WELTS are bruises that arise as a result of the blow of a fist. OPEN SORES are fresh festering wounds which must be squeezed out. (Stoekhardt)

But these wounds now have not been squeezed out nor stitched nor relieved with ointment. Therefore the wounds from which Israel is suffering have not been healed. (Stoeckhardt)

Not a part or member remains that has not been smitten. To be sure, we deserve more smiting; but there is no room, because already the whole head has been smitten enough and is sick. Even now the whole heart is faint. Even though I could undoubtedly find a place to smite you, yet I still desist, because there is no physician to provide a cure. Nor do you want to be reformed. You promise yourselves the highest seats in heaven, etc. So it is with our hypocrites. But no matter how much we have sinned, there is no reason for us to despair, provided that we acknowledge our sins and have knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and of God's mercy in Him. If there is no light, there will be no room for a cure. Isaiah is a rhetorician in a wonderful manner, and he uses flowery language; for he almost always employs allegories and figures of speech. The people are the body; the head, the superiors; the heart, the sages and practitioners of justice. The remaining classes of the people are the other members. Therefore He wants to say that these people are smitten and abased as much in the upper classes as in the lower classes of men. Look at the histories. When the 10 tribes were led up, how the two tribes in the land of Judah and elsewhere feared for themselves! For the words of the prophet should not be pulled apart to apply only to this or that historical situation, but the prophet speaks in a general way except when he speaks of Christ. This is the hardness of the human heart, which is deep and inscrutable, since it has been impenitent. For even though all evils are inflicted on it, yet it remains hard like the trunk of a tree and like an anvil. This is the heart that deserves to be terrified by even a flying leaf (Lev. 26:36), since it does not have the promises by which it may be buoyed up and lacks the comfort of faith and help. It is smitten within by dread, blindness, and madness. Without there are disturbances of all classes: of princes, prophets, and priests of the people, since God smites all things. There is no physician with the obligation to cure this, that is, no prophet with the obligation to proclaim and teach this. Yet there are false prophets who presume to offer comfort of a sort, but as it is in Jeremiah, the people are worse off because of the cure offered by those men. (Luther)

oil. Commonly used for treating wounds (see Lk 10:34). (CSB)

Pus was pressed out of boils or infected wounds. Cuts were bound with bandages; scabs and sores were soothed with olive oil. (TLSB)

The healing of the wounds is a picture of the pastoral preaching of the prophets. The prophets have done all that was possible to heal Israel of the blows and wounds. They censured the people's sins and held God's consolation before the people. They called Israel to repentance, so that it might be freed from the blows and wounds, from the punishment. But the desired healing did not come about. Israel prevented it. Israel did not wish to be healed. The people spurned the compassionate help of its God. It did not want the basics the prophets were offering. All the more pitiful is the spectacle of the inwardly sick and the outwardly mutilated body. (Stoeckhardt)

Oil denotes the Word of grace and the promise of good things. The wound is first cleansed and purged of bloody matter with a sponge or a cloth; then it is soothed with oil and bandaged with a plaster. This means that sins must first be shown, and penitence must be preached; then the promises must be added, and the Word of grace with which to assuage the grief of contrition. (Luther)

Hebrews 10:31, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into hands of the living God."

To "fall into the hands of the living God," sinking into His caring arms in the day of need, is a wonderful indeed. But to fall into those hands when the heart is full of unbelief and sin is nothing

short of dreadful. The living God is no “slap-em-on-the back” fellow who with a wink of the eye, “That’s okay.” He means it with eternal seriousness when He says in Mark 16:16, “Whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (PBC)

1:7–9 The desolation of the land of Judah is the result of foreign invasion: e.g., by Aram, the northern kingdom of Israel, Edom and Philistia (2Ch 28:5–18); later (701 B.C.), by King Sennacherib and the Assyrian army (36:1–2); still later (605–586), by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonian army. (CSB)

The discipline of God often came in the form of foreign armies that invaded Israel’s homeland. God asked His OT children to look at the results of His discipline. The condition in Jerusalem around 700 B.C. were a long way from the glory days of David and Solomon. In Isaiah’s day, those glory days returned during the reign of Uzziah and Jotham, but they quickly disappeared. Twice Jerusalem witnessed the discipline Isaiah announced here. First the armies of Israel and Syria ravaged the countryside and left Jerusalem “like a hut in a field of melons.” Then, years later, the Assyrian army left Judah just as it is described here. Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem but was unable to subdue it. God intervene to preserve the city. But the courtiers felt the power of the Assyrian armies. The citizens of Jerusalem watched it all from the top of the city wall that protected them. It happened before their very eyes. They could do nothing to change the course of events. But this prophecy stood to remind them that it all came from God because of their sin and rebellion. (PBC)

1:7 *country lies desolate* – The punishment that Judah has received is described in explicit terms. The land of Judah has been laid waste and been transformed almost into a great wilderness. The cities are burned with fire, literally: incinerated by fire. The earth, the produce of its fields is right before its eyes being laid waste by strangers, by strangers, by enemies who have pillaged the land. And desolation is everywhere, like the subversion by strangers, meaning, like subversion executed by strange. (Stoeckhardt)

When Isaiah prophesied, this had not yet happened except in the land of Israel. Therefore there are some who refer this passage to the devastation of Israel when it was led into Assyria under Jotham. Accordingly, He is saying: In your presence this happened, and it will happen more completely when even your whole kingdom will be overwhelmed. Now the body politic is afflicted, and a part of the land lies desolate, to be devastated even more by the Chaldeans. In Hebrew the country is called fields, soil, אֶרֶץ, which means red and fertile earth. The prophet has put the container for the content,¹⁶ the field for the produce. (Luther)

foreigners devour your land – It is as if He were saying: “You are sons and lords of the land because the Lord hands it over to you, but because of your sins you will be forced to see outsiders rule over it and enjoy its fruits. (Luther)

During Isaiah’s lifetime, Judah suffered destructive raids by several enemies. The worst came with an invasion by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (cf 2Ki 18:13). (TLSB)

desolate. Ravaged and with few people; many would be killed or exiled into captivity. (TLSB)

1:8 *Daughter of Zion*. A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

booth. Temporary structures used by watchmen (Job 27:18), who were on the lookout for thieves and intruders. Thus Jerusalem was not very defensible. (CSB)

Minimal shelter, useful only for short periods of time. Depicts subsistence, not comfort. (TLSB)

Jerusalem alone has remained untouched and so resembles a hut in a vineyard, a watchman's shelter in a field. In a vineyard and in a field of cucumbers there is no evidence far and wide of anything human. Simply a lonely hut or shelter that the watchman has built, indicating that such a person still has his quarters here. Thus Jerusalem stands as the only place of human habitation in the midst of a desolate environment. For that reason it resembles also a beleaguered city. Enemies are living all around them. Thus Jerusalem's inhabitants do not venture out beyond the walls of the city. They are bottled up within their city as though a hostile army were already before the gates. (Stoeckhardt)

What is, what remained of Jerusalem will not be a kingdom or a palace but huts for shepherds and cabins for the night watch. For when the whole body has been smitten to such an extent that no place is left for a blow, yet the sins remain, and there is no one to heal, to mourn, to restore. And the wounds fester. Nothing is left except that the whole kingdom is corrupted and destroyed, just as unbandaged wounds putrefy and corrupt more and more from day to day. And compared with its flourishing state, the kingdom of Judah will be devastated like a single little hut in a vineyard. After the princes and the nobles had been led away, the peasants and the rabble were left behind. Therefore you should not think that nothing at all was left in the land. (Luther)

1:9–10 *Sodom ... Gomorrah.* Classic examples of sinful cities that were completely destroyed (see 3:9; Ge 13:13; 18:20–21; 19:5, 24–25). Just as Jesus addressed Peter as though he were Satan (Mt 16:23), so Isaiah addresses his countrymen as though they were the rulers of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah. (CSB)

So why did the Lord continue to send such discipline? He still loved His children. He still wanted them to receive the gracious blessings He had for them. While the Lord Almighty could have abandoned these people because of their stubborn rebellion, He had promised a Savior for all the world through them. The stench of their sins rose to heaven was no different than the stench of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 18:19). Remember, God rained fire from heaven upon those citizens because of their sins and destroyed them forever. Their place remains desolate and dead even today. He would bring a similar judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem. (PBC)

1:9† Quoted in Ro 9:29, where it is linked with Isa 10:22–23. Isaiah often refers to the remnant that will survive God's judgment on the nation (see 4:3; 10:20–23; 11:11, 16; 46:3). (CSB)

Some would survive, but only a few. Isaiah inserts this observation. The Lord had the power to destroy all His people just like He destroyed those two godless cities, but the Lord had a promise to keep. He would leave survivors among the Jew in order to fulfill the promise He made to Adam, Abraham, David and others. The Savior would come; God would see to it. He would preserve a remnant because of His gracious promise, not because these people were any better than the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. In some ways they were worse. The Lord had made them His people, but they rejected Him. Sodom and Gomorrah had no such advantage to squander. (PBC)

The Hebrew word שְׁרִיטָה means survivors. The Septuagint has translated it with "seed." Paul followed this version in Rom. 9:29. He applied this passage as a general statement to his own times. God had promised that He would be the God of Abraham and of his seed forever. Because of this promise there always remain among the Jews those who belong to Christ, and a kingdom

of the Jews had to remain for the sake of Christ, who wanted to be born, to preach, and to die there, namely, as the One promised to that nation. Thus that tree was cut down, yet the root and the stump remained, and this out of the pure mercy of God and the superabundance of His grace. In Sodom no survivors remained. This is a rebuke directed against the saints and the self-righteous—a rebuke especially of those whose conversion through an offering will be impossible. But true conversion is a matter of faith, not of works. (Luther)

Sodom ... Gomorrah. OT's ultimate expression of rebellion (Gn 18–19; cf Jude 7). Unlike these sinful cities, Judah and Jerusalem were not completely annihilated. In mercy, God left a remnant (6:13; 11:1, 11). Gregory of Nazianzus: "Whenever I hear Isaiah threaten the people of Sodom and rulers of Gomorrah ... I am almost filled with horror, and melted to tears. It is impossible, he says, to find any blow to add ... so completely have you run through the whole, and exhausted every form of chastisement, ever calling upon yourselves some new one by your wickedness" (NPNF 2 7:252–53). (TLSB)

1:10 *hear...rulers of Sodom...give ear* – Isaiah now called upon the people of Judah and Jerusalem to listen. But note the title He used, "rulers of Sodom" and "people of Gomorrah." The titles were sharp arrows wounding the pride of God's people. The heavenly Father revealed His anger toward His children. The entire section is the strongest proclamation of law. Each verse destroys human pride. The powerful condemnations of this section blister God's people. These verses are brutal and without mercy as God accuses His people of sin. No escape from His wrath is available here. Like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the people of Jerusalem deserve annihilation too. (PBC)

The prophet was a man with a great and burning spirit. Paul says in Rom. 10:19f. that after Moses Isaiah has courage, when one considers the circumstances and the importance of his words. Certainly this is an exceedingly sharp reproof. Yet it was spoken under godly King Uzziah, who is praised in Scripture. Undoubtedly there were also many good people in this nation. Under King Ahaz they would not have put up with this reproach. They do not want to be accused of being ungodly. Now, therefore, the prophet begins as a good teacher to tell them what they must do to put an end to the affliction of the head and the members, namely, that first their hypocritical and pharisaical righteousness must be done away with. (Luther)

1:11–15 The sincerity of the worshiper, not the number of his religious activities, is most important (see 66:3; Jer 7:21–26; Hos 6:6; Am 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8). (CSB)

1:11 *multitude of your sacrifices* – They claimed to worship God at the same time they violated His laws. On God's emphatic rejection of outward formality without inward participation, cf Ps 40:6; Am 5:21–24; Mi 6:7–8. Luther: "The ungodly disregard faith and consider sacrifice to be the supreme worship of God ... they despise the kernel and admire the husk" (AE 16:15). (TLSB)

Judah-Jerusalem appealed to the numbers of its offerings. It brought many offerings and did not miss a single one of the offerings prescribed in the Law and outwardly played it exactly according to the Law. (Steckhardt)

Here we are propelled into the time of King Jotham. During this period temple worship was in its most vigorous stage. But the Lord now asks people and rulers: To what purpose the countless offerings? (Steckhardt)

Religious activity is another apparent solace against the demands of God and the threat of His wrath and punishment. The people of Judah and Jerusalem had the temple within their border

and offered God Himself prescribed. They concluded that they were different from Sodom and Gomorrah. Surely, they believed, God would be pleased with them if they worshiped as He commanded. But this section of Isaiah's message robbed them of that vain hope. God didn't need their sacrifices any more than He needs the sacrifices of any other people. (PBC)

According to the judgment of the flesh, which does not understand the Holy Spirit, these words are indeed pure blasphemies. The prophet agrees with David in Ps. 40:6 and in Ps. 50:13, and with others who reject the sacrifices offered for the purpose of appeasing God, such as Jer. 7:22; Ezek. 20:25, although the offering of sacrifices was the supreme work and was commanded by God through Moses. And this is our doctrine of faith, that God is not appeased by our works and merits; for He neither needs nor wants them in order that we may have glory. But He Himself, who has regard for nothing else than His own goodness, has the glory. Therefore whoever wants to appease God by his own merits is worse than the Sodomites, namely, an idolater. Consequently, these people are reproached here in this way because they do not understand the Law. But when the godly bring sacrifices, they testify that they believe God; and by this faith they are justified. The ungodly disregard faith and consider sacrifice to be the supreme worship of God; that is, they despise the kernel and admire the husk. To them faith is worthless because they do not see it, but they do see the showiness of works and therefore admire them and make much of them. To be sure, sacrifices are not evil; but if on their account I wanted to boast that I am a righteous child of God, etc., then I would be misusing them. It is like this: If I wanted to boast that I am an heir of heaven because of the bright eye God gave me, I would be misusing an otherwise good eye and would be making it only an idol and making a liar of God, who says that He will be gracious for His own sake, not for the sake of anything else whatever. Therefore we must do works only for the purpose of bearing witness to faith in God—the faith by which I acknowledge that He is merciful and freely pours out His mercy on my misery. And in the end he is a true Christian who neither is presumptuous in his works nor despairs in his sins, even though he avoids sins and does good works. Nevertheless, the affections of hope must be fixed on God alone, not on a creature or a work. (Luther)

I have had enough of burnt offerings – God instituted the sacrificial system, but it is worthless without faith (Heb 11:6). Mere repetition does not help. (TLSB)

This means that He is disgusted with them; that is, that they are useless to Him and that He has need neither of eating the flesh nor of drinking the blood for the purpose of being appeased but is nauseated by them, even though they were the most praiseworthy offerings in the Law, especially the fat, which, as He has particularly mentioned, was offered to Him. Does the prophet not forbid good works here? Not the works, but the attitude. (Luther)

fattened animals. Those kept in confinement for special feeding. (CSB)

I HAVE NO PLEASURE – “I do not delight” is better, since he is speaking of the present status of the people before God. There was not the least praise even for the offering of blood, from which they abstained completely. They smeared and sprinkled the altars. Yet He condemns even this form of worship. What, then, is holy, when the best part of the religion is removed? (Luther)

Without faith, the means that God established were not pleasing to Him. (TLSB)

1:12 *when you come to appear before me* – It is as if He were complaining of the insult that by their entrance into the court they have desecrated the place. He does not consider them worthy of entrance into the court, as if they were an unbearable burden for His court. It is as if He were

saying: “You enter My court as filthy peasants going into a lovely creek with their muddy boots.” And this applies properly to the priests, who entered behind the veil and appeared before the Lord. The face of the Lord was the name given to those images in the tabernacle, where God had said He would dwell. Therefore those who entered were said to see the face of the Lord. And surely such a religion handed down by God should not be despised. What God hands down is something great, even if it is physical, that men may know that they worship God through these things; for otherwise one seeks God here, another there, yet will find God nowhere except where He has bound Himself through His Word. (Luther)

who has required of you – It is as if He were complaining of the insult that by their entrance into the court they have desecrated the place. He does not consider them worthy of entrance into the court, as if they were an unbearable burden for His court. It is as if He were saying: “You enter My court as filthy peasants going into a lovely creek with their muddy boots.” And this applies properly to the priests, who entered behind the veil and appeared before the Lord. The face of the Lord was the name given to those images in the tabernacle, where God had said He would dwell. Therefore those who entered were said to see the face of the Lord. And surely such a religion handed down by God should not be despised. What God hands down is something great, even if it is physical, that men may know that they worship God through these things; for otherwise one seeks God here, another there, yet will find God nowhere except where He has bound Himself through His Word. (Luther)

this trampling of my courts – The citizens of Judah-Jerusalem went diligently into the temple in order to appear before the face of God. The temple was the Lord’s house. There God dwelt amid His people. There God was to make His appearance before the people. But the mere, outward attendance in the temple, that the godless and the unholy came into the temple, God had not demanded. This is not what He had in mind. Such external temple service had no worth, was nothing else but that Israel, as indicated by the apposition, trampled under foot the forecourt of the temple. That godless, impenitent sinners visit the house of God, in order to appear before the face of God, is not what God wants. When hypocrites come to church, they do nothing else but wear out the floor and take up space in the pews. (Stoeckhardt)

People are not worshipping, but acting like animals (v 3). Luther: “God requires our works, and He does not require them. How is this? I answer: He simply requires them, not as if they themselves were necessary or as if He wanted to be appeased by them. Thus, on the other hand, He does not require them. But consider the folly of men. We reverse the order and want to serve God with works and men with faith. Thus they say that what has been presented to the sacrificing priests has been given to God and must not be turned to profane uses. Of course, it has been given to them that they might serve God. But to serve and come to the aid of neighbors, to those who are needy, this they do not consider to be a service of God. For this reason they are taken to task here” (AE 16:16). (TLSB)

1:13 *vain*. Empty, worthless. (TLSB)

incense is an abomination to me – Two more kinds of bloodless offerings are named, which Judah likewise did not fail to make, oblations and offerings of incense. But these made by Judah at the time were useless, profitless offerings. The proper attitude was lacking. Such heartless offerings are not only displeasing to God but an abomination as well. (Stoeckhardt)

These are the things you boast of very much and proclaim, and you establish many new things. Moses called those declared festivals the chief ones. I cannot, says God, endure *אָוֶן*, that is, iniquity, and *מַעֲרָה* or *מַעֲרָה*, that is, solemn assembly. Thus the speech grows. For first He said

that He was disgusted with their offerings and that they were an abomination; now He says that they are utterly useless and evil, and that He does not want them. ~~⌋⌋~~, that is, trouble. This is properly transferred by a metaphor to their pursuits of piety and their idols. For those things are nothing but trouble and toil, and those hypocrites burden themselves with many ceremonies and unbearable things. Yet they gain nothing fruitful or useful. It is sheer toil, weariness, and trouble, which fruitlessly devour the worshiper himself in a restless spirit, even though otherwise they eat and drink, etc. The Jews rejoiced before the Lord on seven festive days, but on the seventh day they were called together and blessed after the Law had been read and they had prayed. Behold, this diligence is also fruitless. There is no difference between the new moon and the calends, but both mean the same thing, namely, the new moon and the first day of the month. (Luther)

Offered with sacrifices in the temple. (TLSB)

abomination. Wrongly offered without faith, the gift to God became a curse. (TLSB)

New moon and Sabbath. Monthly offerings (Nu 28:11–14) and weekly worship on the day of rest. (TLSB)

convocations. Religious festivals. Isaiah may be specifically referring to the Feast of Booths or Yom Kippur. (TLSB)

iniquity and solemn assembly. Summary of the faithless hypocrisy already condemned. (TLSB)

1:14 *your* – By adding this word the prophet means that the Jews also established other festivals besides those of Moses, and those additions constantly obscure the first good institution of God. Satan always wants to be God’s mimic and ape, but God hates him. (Luther)

New Moon festivals. Celebrated on the first day of each month. Special sacrifices and feasts were part of the observance (see Nu 28:11–15). (CSB)

appointed feasts. Included the annual feasts, such as Passover, Weeks (Pentecost) and Tabernacles (Ex 23:14–17; 34:18–25; Lev 23; Dt 16:1–17). (CSB)

Festivals celebrated by the rebellious are odious to God. To Him they are a burden that He does not want to cannot tolerate for long. (Stoeckhardt)

hates. God’s righteous and holy rejection of sin. (CSB)

bearing. God had tolerated their actions, but will not continue to do so. (TLSB)

1:15 *when spread out your hands* – The OT posture for prayer was to stand with arms outstretched. Most of the time it was with arms stretched toward heaven with palms open. The posture showed that the person in prayer knew that the source of everything was God above and that God was ready to give His blessings into the hands of the one praying. But God indicated that not even their prayers these people offered were unacceptable no matter how fervently and often they prayed. (PBC)

The perversion that soured the worship of Judah is the perversion that sours every worship. Human being have nothing to offer God that will appease Him. Whenever they believe

something they do – even sincere worship and fervent prayer – can make God love them they are offending God. (PBC)

hide my eyes. In 8:17; 59:2 God hides his face from Israel (see also Mic 3:4). (CSB)

God closes eyes and ears to the prayers of the godless and hypocrites. (Stoekhardt)

hands are full of blood – Guilt of unconfessed and unforgiven sin. (TLSB)

Judah's hands were full of blood. Blood was not actually sticking to their hands as they raised them up in prayer. But in God's eyes they were stained with blood. Before God they were murderers because of the atrocities and unrighteousness whereof they had become guilty towards their brothers. Those who do not wish to serve and obey God also disavow all love and compassion for the neighbor. And the sighs of the brothers then come as an obstacle between the prayers of the oppressors and the face of God. (Stoekhardt)

By the hands are meant the works which should be done for the needy neighbor. But he who does not help his neighbor destroys him. 1 John 3:15 states: "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer." Ambrose says: "Feed your starving brother. If you have not fed him, you have killed him."¹⁸ We read (Matt. 25:42): "I was hungry, and you gave Me no food." Again (1 John 3:17): "If anyone has the world's goods, etc." In short, he who does not practice love toward his neighbor is regarded by God as a murderer; for even though he is able to help, yet he does not do so. So far as he is concerned, he lets his brother perish. In brief, the meaning is this: "You have hands full of blood. Therefore your prayers and all your efforts are ungodly." Thus with one word he involves them in all sins and proves them guilty of damnation. This statement does not disturb us very much, but God certainly does not speak in vain. What good thing would bloodhounds pray for? Consider how many monsters there are in the world, and how much ungodliness. We do everything except what love demands; we give much for monstrous and godless religions but nothing for the need of the poor. Clean before men, but unclean, cruel, and murderers before God. Who could rest when thinking of these things? God grant that these things do not come to mind in the last hour! James says: "Come now, you rich, weep, etc." (James 5:1). One aspect of ungodliness is unfaithfulness. Another is bloodiness; that is, a lack of love, which is the fruit of faith. We neglect these, and meanwhile we busy ourselves in vain with various religions. Nobody considers how great the demand of faith and love is. What, then, is to be done? Now he sets forth a command in an affirmative manner. (Luther)

1:16–18 Gregory of Nyssa: "These then are indications in deed and act of regeneration by Baptism. Let us ... consider the prophecies of it" (NPNF 2 5:522). "The prophet both urges repentance and adds the promise.... He insists that such works are necessary in the new life. At the same time, he means that the forgiveness of sins is received through faith. So the promise is added" (Ap V 137). (TLSB)

1:16 *wash yourselves; make your deeds clean* – Those who until now have done evil and angered God by their hypocritical prayer and worship should wash and purge themselves, at the same time cleanse also their hearts.

He mentions two parts. One is to put aside filth, unfaithfulness, hatred, and all ungodliness. The other is to do good. Thus David says (Ps. 37:27): "Depart from evil and do good." The filth is removed by a bath. Cleanness is a new kind of life. Therefore wash yourselves from ungodliness; cleanse yourselves through godliness. Put an end to the unclean blindness and the bloody hand. (Luther)

God must do this through His means; we cannot deliver ourselves. Chemnitz: “Is righteousness given because of these works? Absolutely not! For the prophet himself says in 45:24, ‘In the Lord is my righteousness’ ” (*LTh* 2:641). (TLSB)

Psalm 51:2, “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

Psalm 51:7, “Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”

Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

1:17 See Jer 22:16; Jas 1:27. (CSB)

learn to do good – Do good instead and strive to for what is right before God, for what God has demanded in His Law. (Stoekhardt)

seek justice, correct oppression – They should in particular show love and compassion for those who are in need. (Stoekhardt)

טפֿשׁ, he judged; טפֿשִׁמִּי judgment, right. Justice, however, called קִדְּוָה, is the administration and the carrying out of the right, namely, when what is right is done. הִקְדִּישׁ, that is, justifying justice or alms (cf. Dan. 4:24). Such a one, says Jer. 23 and Ps. 24:5, will receive blessing from God and הִקְדִּישׁ; that is, he will be blessed and justified by the Lord. קִדְּוָה seems to pertain to external righteousness, which, however, is right if it flows from internal righteousness. Now, however, justice proceeds only as far as the purse does. (Luther)

fatherless ... widow. Represented the weak and often oppressed part of society. Rulers were warned not to take advantage of them (see v. 23; 10:2; Jer 22:3). (CSB)

Careless treatment of the helpless revealed lack of faith. (TLSB)

Widows and orphans are special charges of God. In His Law God especially enjoins the duty to attend to widows and orphans. And since widows and orphans are often deceived about their rights by unscrupulous relatives and judges, above all else, therefore compassion is demanded, to look after the affairs of widows and orphans and help them achieve justice. (Stoekhardt)

The defense of an orphan consists in bringing it about that he is not oppressed. When there is no defender in the world, then a poor man lies exposed everywhere to every act of robbery. Consider the dealings of guardians and those who draw up wills, whether they are guilty of blood. Widows have been bereft of a defender. Here there is sinning in an extraordinary manner. Many live for themselves. Meanwhile they neglect the poor, devote themselves to prayer, and consider themselves saints. Yet it is not enough not to have harmed one’s neighbor; God also demands positive uplifting of the needy through love, and one’s whole substance and life must be expended for the brethren, as John 3:17 says. Would that we only realized that this is our duty! For it is evil for us to think smugly that we are living a good life. For it is a serious matter, because you hear: “The Lord says.” (Luther)

1:18 *come now* – Now the Father shows His love for His disobedient and rebellious children. He invites them, “Come now.” The previous words of accusation and punishment caused sinners to cringe and hide, but now He also spoke gentle words of love and forgiveness. This is the gospel.

With nothing to offer, Judah and Jerusalem came before God convicted. But they did not receive what they deserved. Instead, the stains of their sins were washed away. The only thing that could wash away the sins of God's children was the blood of Christ. What a beautiful promise for sinners of all time! If we are included in the indictments of the law in the earlier section, then we are also included in the promise of cleansing. (PBC)

reason together. Israel, summoned to the court of divine justice is guilty. Instead of passing sentence, the Judge proposes a full pardon. The appropriate question is whether the accused will throw themselves on the mercy of the court (cf Rm 4:5; 11:6). If God's promise restores their faith, it will also move and enable them to be willing and obedient believers (v 19) instead of rebellious evildoers (v 4). (TLSB)

Come, and let us have a discussion. It is as if He were saying: "I will enter into judgment with you. If I do not do good and am not gracious to those who do these things, believe, are washed and clean, then accuse Me and charge falsely that I am not God. Indeed, it is God's inward feeling and His preponderant desire. How much He would want us to be good! Oh, would that we acknowledged our evils with all our hearts! Then the Spirit would finally come. But to pass away in folly in this manner, this is regrettable. Christianity is surely a constant sobbing. Who of the two, then, is more righteous, the people, who do wrong and love their own strivings while despising God's commandments, namely, of faith and love, or God, who censures and condemns these strivings? (Luther)

scarlet ... crimson. Refers to the blood that has stained the hands of murderers (see vv. 15, 21). (CSB)

Deep-red permanent dye; its stain was impossible to remove from clothing. (TLSB)

The Hebrew word "shani" is the name of a color, means red, bright red or deep red. The plural "shaniys" designates cloth that is impregnated with this color. Therefore, we translate something like this: "clothing dyed scarlet." Deep red or blood red sin is as much as capital crime, sin that forfeit life. (Stoeckhardt)

Scarlet, Tyrian purple, shellfish purple, dye from a purple fish, purple. This is a new and strange way of speaking. Why did He not rather say black sins? Black denotes sadness, but red denotes bloodguiltiness. Sins are red when we are guilty of blood. "Deliver me," he says, "from bloodguiltiness" (Ps. 51:14), that is, from the guilt of death and of punishments. (Luther)

like wool. † A powerful figurative description of the result of forgiveness (see Ps 51:7). (CSB)

Pure white; the scarlet of sin is removed. Ambrose: "Purge my ears, that no stains of the infidelity they have heard remain anywhere. Cleanse thoroughly, then, our ears, not with water of well, river, or rippling and purling brook, but with words cleansing like water, clearer than water, purer than any snow" (NPNF 2 10:222). (TLSB)

White is the color of innocence, signifies holiness and righteousness. This sentence from God is Gospel to the highest power. Here we learn what grace and justification by grace mean. For this extraordinary sentence on the part of God is intended for all sinners, who along with Judah bear the same guilt and condemnation. Sinners stand before God's tribunal burdened with base unrighteousness. Their conscience must pronounce the sentence: We are damned, children of death. And they can expect no other sentence from the just God. But then they perceive in the

Word where God speaks to them, in the Gospel, as in this Gospel of Is. 1:18, an altogether different voice, and altogether different sentence. God pronounces the sinners, the guilty, save that in the sinners He finds no basis or grounds for such a sentence, rid and free of their sins, declares the sinners to be not-guilty, pure, holy, and righteous. This is the remarkable judgment of justification that God declares the ungodly righteous. (Rom 4:5) We know from the NT, as even from the OT, also from the book of Isaiah, that this justification of sinners is mediated through Christ, that cleanses sinners from their iniquity by the blood of Christ, that God imputes to the unrighteous the perfect righteousness of Christ. However, that God sent Christ, His Son, to be the Savior of the world is pure grace, free favor and love. (Stoekhardt)

Note how God used law and gospel in this chapter. Before people can understand the gospel, they must understand the law. Luther points out, “But this is Scripture’s wants: first to terrify, to reveal sins, to bring on the recognition of oneself, to humble hearts. Then, when they have been driven to despair, its second office follows, namely the buoying up and consolation of consciences, the promises. This is how the Holy Spirit teaches. Satan, on the other hand, worms until he inflicts innocent hearts. Then he leaves behind horrible terror and despair without consolation.” (LW, Volume 16, Page 6) (PBC)

White is the sign of innocence and justice. Therefore the angels, as innocent spirits, appeared mostly in white garments. For Oriental kings, namely, for those who were rather mild, the special attire was white. But bloodthirsty Rome conducted itself as worthy of purple.²⁰ Therefore the meaning here is this: “Though your sins are in the highest degree deserving of punishments and death, they will be worthy of righteousness and faith; and though they are worms, they will not bite you.” Certainly the fullest, finest, and sweetest consolation. Although we have very many sins, yet they will be as if they did not exist. Nor will they frighten us, even if they are present; for they are white. The Jews used white wool very often. Consequently, even in the Song of Solomon (4:2; 6:5) white teeth are compared to wool. Therefore he simply says here: “Like wool.” (Luther)

crimson ... become like wool. Restatement for emphasis. Wool means undyed (white) cloth. Luther: “Why did He not rather say black sins? Black denotes sadness, but red denotes bloodguiltiness. Sins are red when we are guilty of blood.... White is the sign of innocence and justice” (AE 16:20). (TLSB)

1:19–20 *eat ... eaten by the sword.* The vivid contrast is stressed by the use of the same Hebrew verb. (CSB)

In Hebrew, a “blade,” lit, has a “mouth.” God provides for His faithful people, but the rebellious face destruction from enemy armies, whose swords “eat them,” consuming their life. (TLSB)

1:19 *if you are willing and obedient* – God’s judgment, the justification of sinners, stands fast, completely independent of men’s conduct. God forgives the sinner and declares him righteous, not because he behaves in this or that way, not even because he believes, but for His own sake. However, this judgment on the part of God is now made known and brought to the attention of sinners in order that they might give ear to it and believe it. (Stoekhardt)

So where does this put human efforts such as love, justice, kindness, help to the oppressed, and worship? The people of Isaiah’s day had perverted these things by thinking that they could earn something from the Lord by their efforts. No matter how great and pure, human virtue cannot accomplish such an enormous goal. Even turning toward God, trusting in His promises, and living in accordance with His will does not remove sin. Children of God repent and show love,

joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control only for the purpose of bearing witness to their faith in God. They worship to be reassured of God's promises, to praise Him for His undeserved love, and to encourage others to trust the forgiveness only God can supply. Any notion of being good to earn something from God pollutes worship and the gospel because it arrogantly asserts that human effort can appease the God of the universe. (PBC)

shall eat the good of the land – To the spiritual promise He adds a physical one. Therefore for faith He promises the forgiveness of sins, namely, a spiritual promise; and for love and clean hands He promises an abundance of temporal goods. “Give,” He says in Luke 6:38, “and it will be given to you; good measure.” Because you have left, etc., “a hundredfold,” Matt. 19:29 says. “Seek first the kingdom of God,” Matt. 6:33 says. (Luther)

1:20 *if you refuse and rebel* – If you scorn and reject the Gospel of God's grace, then you still are and will remain in your sins and will have to endure the punishment of sinners. (Stoeckhardt)

eaten by the sword – “I will not let the obedient be unrewarded or the disobedient unpunished.” God first gives Himself to the godly, and then He gives all good things. What more could or should He do? But this profusion bestowed even on the ungodly will make their judgments worse.” (Luther)

mouth of the Lord has spoken – He will surely proceed in this way and in no other. He adds this to frighten them. For it is not Marcolphus, not Demosthenes, not Vergil who is speaking; but since He teaches, promises, and threatens in vain, for this reason He returns to Himself and again begins to expostulate. Similarly, when we see no progress of the Word, we, too, cry out: “Is it not a blow that so great a light is despised in this way?” (Luther)

1:1–20 The Lord accuses Israel of ignorance and rebellion, yet plans for their repentance and forgiveness. A chief sin is corruption and indifference in their worship services. Today, the Lord calls you to purity in prayer and worship as taught by His Word. When you confess your sins, He promises faithfully to forgive you on account of Jesus' pure sacrifice. • Precious Lord Jesus, Your blood cleanses away the stain of my sin. Teach me sincerity in worship. Amen. (TLSB)

The Unfaithful City

21 How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. **22** Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. **23** Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them. **24** Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. **25** I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. **26** And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” **27** Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. **28** But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. **29** For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. **30** For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. **31** And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.

1:21 Jerusalem (representing all Judah) has been an unfaithful wife to the Lord. By following idols and foreign gods she has become a harlot in a spiritual sense (see v. 4; Jer 3:6–14; Eze 16:25–26). (CSB)

Jerusalem, the heart of Judah. Described (with all God’s people) as His Bride (Rv 21:2). (TLSB)

This is not meant as though the streets of Jerusalem were crowded with highway robbers. But violence, tyranny dwelt and ruled now in the city. The lowly were oppressed, tyrannized. And this also is murder, gross transgression of the Fifth Commandment. (Stoeckhardt)

He uses meaningful and emphatic words. It is as if He were saying: “Why is it that such clear blessings, promises, and threats accomplish nothing?” To commit fornication away from God is a strong expression. This is what Jerusalem, which was once loyal and upright and in which the truth shall be, is doing. He who is faithful is contrasted to hypocrisy and false religion, which is called fornication before God, where faith has been abandoned and hearts are prostituted to false teachings. Here formerly there was the true faith, which makes righteous. There were excellent rulers, such as David, Solomon, etc., who practiced justice. Superstitions and the traditions of men did not hold sway. Righteousness, that is, the carrying out of justice, dwelt here, that is, was in operation. Now, however, there are murderers. Thus it is stated above (v. 15): “Your hands are full of blood, etc.” This is hard preaching for delicate ears. The truth is biting, and therefore it brings forth hatred. (Luther)

whore. Rejecting God’s perfect love and choosing sin and idolatry is as offensive and foolish as adultery. Cf Hos 4:13. (TLSB)

1:22 *silver has become dross...best wine mixed with water – dross.* Worthless material in metal ore, discarded after metal is refined. (TLSB)

mixed with water. God still provides for the wicked, but His blessings are diluted and not recognized. (TLSB)

The city of Jerusalem is addressed as representative of the entire land. Jerusalem’s silver, its delicious drink are the princes, high-born of the people. They are people also of noble disposition. But the high-born have become ordinary. The silver has become worthless matter. The tasty wine had been diluted with water. Dross, water is a picture of vulgar, contemptible behavior. (Stoeckhardt)

This is the prophet’s fullness of expression as he explains what a harlot is. The meaning is the same, but the words are different. With the word “silver” he simply refers to all ruling princes. Dross is very much like silver. Yet it is not silver, and it has no value. Thus Jerusalem has the appearance of sanctity; but in it there is sheer hypocrisy, the sediment of silver. They are criminal children of saintly fathers. And this is the great sentence against all perversions of righteousness. For among us, too, mere masks have arisen from the best bishops. It is dross, not silver. Water, not wine, except only in appearance. The people are neither refreshed nor gladdened either by doctrine or by civil government. For this allegory applies to both. Godly officials in the church as well as in the state are silver and wine, and they give strength and joy. The godless, on the other hand, oppress and destroy. (Luther)

1:23 Symptoms of faithlessness. Those who love God will be opposed to such things. (TLSB)

princesses are rebels – The princes,, the rulers and judges of the people, who are supposed to be governing and judging by divine right and in accordance with the Law of God, are rebellious, covenant violators, as is the entire people. They are accomplices of thieves. The city is filled with murderers and thieves. It is the people of lowly estate, yes, the widows and orphans who were being robbed, by cunning, by a show of right swindled out of what theirs. And the rulers and judges upheld deceit and thievery, did not see that justice was done, helped those in the wrong to achieve their purpose and goal by permitting themselves to be bribed, by accepting gifts. What could one expect of people and city when its rulers promoted injustice instead of shunning and avoiding the same. (Stoeckhardt)

Who will listen to God? The announcement of free cleansing from God is welcome news to those who are crushed by the law. But the same announcement means little to those who sense no need for cleansing from sin. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, if forgiveness were announced to the Pharisee in the temple, he may have wondered why he needed forgiveness. After all, he would reason, he was righteous; his deeds proved it; he was better than the tax collector. (PBC)

For the most part, the prophets words went unheeded, much as the words of Jesus went unheeded in the visible church of His day. Here is a lesson for the visible church of any age. Whenever the gospel is perverted by the idea that men and women can appease God by human effort, righteousness departs and the Lord laments. (PBC)

The prophet explains himself. In Hebrew “rebels” are instigators and disobedient. For סוֹדֵר means rebellious, impudent, stubborn, and unreliable; but נִבְרָךְ means one who turns a stranger away and incites him to rebellion. In this way, therefore, He accuses the princes in accordance with their evil state of mind, not according to the Law. (Luther)

companions of thieves – It is a crime of high treason to apply this term to the princes. But he calls them people of this kind for the same reason that he calls them murderers above (v. 21), and here he adds the reasons why they are such people. (Luther)

loves a bribe – It is not wicked to have money, and one could be glad to forgive them if the money is given to them willingly; but to chase after and look for it, this indeed is detestable, especially in princes, who on this account are called companions of thieves. They give nothing; they do nothing except in the hope of getting twice as much back. For the rabble tests friendship from the standpoint of usefulness. They seek only their own advantage to the neglect of others, whether those persons are orphans or widows; and yet it is chiefly for the sake of protecting such people that they administer their office. The law of nature is the law of God, and the prophets teach that one person owes love to the other. Therefore no one will be excused. (Luther)

1:24 *The Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel.* Stressing God’s authority as Judge. (CSB)

Once more Isaiah reminds us that these are the words of the Lord, the God of the covenant, Jehovah. Isaiah identified Him as “the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel. This verse contains more designations for God than any other single verse in Isaiah. The three names emphasize the irresistible power of the God of Israel. On the one hand, such almighty power fills the sinner with great fear because the sinner knows that the Lord can fulfill His threats of punishment and judgment. But, on the other hand, the God of Israel has just graciously and tenderly promised cleansing. He can do that too. (PBC)

Since promises and threats accomplish nothing, He begins to proclaim the coming disaster, and He does this with lofty words. *The Lord of hosts*. In Hebrew: the ruling Lord, who does not rest or sleep in the heavens but rules and effectively carries out what He says. Nor does He let the matter remain in words, as people do for the purpose of terrifying. אָבִיר, strong, splendid, powerful, the God of Jacob. Above (v. 4): “the Holy One of Israel.” He performs all things in His saints. In 2 Cor. 13:3 Paul says that He is powerful in us. In 1 John 4:4 John says: “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (Luther)

on my foes – That is to say: “From the enemies vengeance will come upon this people, one who will comfort Me; and I will avenge Myself through My enemies.”²⁵ For because the Jews were God’s people, the enemies of the Jews were also God’s enemies. “I will be an enemy to your enemies,” He says (Ex. 23:22). The prophets often reminded God of this and said: “They are defiling Thy heritage,” as if God were affronted by an attack on His people. For this reason He says: “The persecutors of My people would also have to be My persecutors, and I would have to protect My people; but these people are living in such an abandoned manner that I am forced to summon My enemies and to reform them through My enemies.” This word “I will vent My wrath has reference to what He said above (v.14), namely, “I am weary.” (Luther)

When humans rebel, they become God’s enemies, deserving His wrath and retribution. Cf Rm 5:10. (TLSB)

avenge. Though God gives authority to leaders, vengeance ultimately belongs to God (Rm 12:19), who alone is just and righteous. God brings justice to unjust people and will punish wickedness. (TLSB)

1:25–26 *turn ... restore*. The use of the same Hebrew verb emphasizes the contrast. (CSB)

1:25 *I will turn my hand against you* – We are to think of all the subsequent judgments that befell the impenitent, hardened people of Israel, of the destruction of the faithless city by the Babylonians, then by the Romans. We are also to think here of the final wrath. The judgment of refinement indicates extermination, destruction, and damnation for stiff-necked sinners. This is the final lot of all the rebellious, of all incorrigible sinners. They are eliminated, weeded out, right from their own locale. (Stoeckhardt)

God announced that He will destroy His enemies. His holiness will be satisfied when He wipes away all who oppose His gracious promises. Believers through the centuries have waited for the full judgment to take place. And it will on the Last day. (PBC)

This is characteristic of divine power and the wrath of God, to chastise in such a way that nevertheless it leaves some seed that is sound. On the other hand, Satan utterly uproots everything, as the godless do in the Psalms. They say: “Let the name of Israel be remembered no more!” (Ps. 83:4) It is as if they were saying: “Let us destroy the tree together with the fruit.” Moreover there is the raging of the world, together with the raging of the devil, about which we read below in chapter 14:10 ff. Thus it is the desire of the persecutors of the Gospel to destroy everybody completely without leaving anything, not even one little page that proclaims the Gospel. But God chastises in order that in spite of this one may see that the people are restored and are not destroyed but only corrected and smitten. Therefore He does not say: “I will utterly destroy all that is sick.” No, He says: “I will turn My hand against you and remove the dross from you; that is, I will punish the wicked government, will remove ungodly teaching and the laws of strangers, and will take away the alloy and leave the pure silver. The silver is greatly changed in color and luster, and perhaps this is why what He called dross above (v. 22) He now calls alloy.

He means the hypocrisy and the semblance of godliness with which they wanted to worship God. They say that the alloy is a stubborn metal that cannot be easily separated from others. Similarly, ungodliness is stubbornly tenacious. Lead and quicksilver are different. Therefore He preferred to say alloy here rather than lead. (Luther)

smelt away your dross. Purifying fire is also mentioned in 4:4; 48:10. (CSB)

God pictures this approach as a smelting process by which metals were purified. Base metal ore is heated, and alkali is added to speed up the melting of the ore. The process removes the impurities and purges away the dross. Purified metal remains. (PBC)

God pursued His strategy of refining throughout human history. He refined Judah and Jerusalem in order to bring the Savior into the world as He promised. By the process He removed hypocrisy, false teaching, and evil. Like adding the alkali, to speed up the process He sometimes added foreign armies and governments that did not know His promises. The judgments mentioned in the book of Isaiah became a part of this smelting process. But it has not ceased with the coming of the Messiah. God continues to refine His church, purging it of those who reject His undeserved love so that it can proclaim the truth of the gospel. By the fire of His judgment, God burns away false teaching, evil and hypocrisy, leaving another purified group of people who treasure God grace in Christ. The process will continue until the end comes. Then God will absolutely and forever separate the godly from the rebels. He will take the redeemed to live in the new Jerusalem, or Zion, in complete joy and happiness. He will throw the rebels and sinners away from His presence forever. (PBC)

Romans 5:3-5, “³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

2 Corinthians 12:9, But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

lye. Caustic substance used for cleaning.(TLSB)

alloy. Combination of other substances that are removed when metal is refined. (TLSB)

1:26 *I will restore your judges* – Here, too, Jerusalem is addressed, but Jerusalem in distinction from the worthless material, from the godless, with exclusion of the godless. This consolation is meant for the penitent, believing members of the people, for the church of God, true Israel. This means as much as: “I shall again give you judges and counselors, such as in former time, in the beginning, men like the pious kings, David, Solomon, like the holy patriarchs. They will render just judgments upon the people, teach properly, give appropriate counsel, bring the people again upon the right way. (Stoekhardt)

The twelve apostles of Israel are the princes, the rulers out of Israel who worthily stand at the side of the holy patriarchs, at the side of Israel’s great kings, David and Solomon. (Stoekhardt)

He interprets Himself by saying what He means by dross and alloy, namely, judges and counselors. This was done through King Sennacherib. (Luther)

Unjust officers are another symptom of lacking faith. (TLSB)

city of righteousness, the faithful. See v. 21. Using a related Hebrew noun, Zech. 8:3 similarly refers to the future Jerusalem as the “City of Truth.” (CSB)

The prophet is here pointing to the NT era. While the rebellious are heading toward final wrath, true Israel makes its appearance in the church of the NT, in the church of Christ. And it appears as a righteous and faithful city as a congregation of saints, as a congregation of God. (Stoeckhardt)

That is, the city of faithfulness and uprightness, or truth. First the persons must be reformed, then both the laws and the city will be more easily reformed. First Moses appointed good judges. Even the best laws are worthless if there are no good judges. Behold, however, it is God who gives good magistrates. They are not produced through many threats or promises, but when God looks for lice on a foolish person with a club. We indeed teach, and we do it strenuously; but we accomplish nothing. Therefore if the people are to be cleansed, they will be cleansed in the way He says: “I will turn my hand against you, etc.” The stubborn refuse to believe but prefer to feel the chastisement. But by chastising He makes the wicked good. (Luther)

1:27–28 This contrast between the redemption of Zion (Jerusalem) as a whole and the perishing of individuals who refuse to repent is developed in 65:8–16. (CSB)

1:27 *redeemed by justice ... righteousness.* Not their own righteousness or justice, but that of the Messiah. Luther: “This means that the Lord is always concerned about preserving the rest, lest they perish. By justice, not by laws. If the kingdom must be restored, this will certainly not be done by the laws of men; but it will be done by justice, that is, by killing the old life and turning it away from injustice, in order that we may become acceptable to God. For a reward follows righteousness, even when it is external; but punishment follows unrighteousness. This is the way to reform men so that they become upright and preserve judgment and justice. Then God will be favorably disposed toward them. Who will then be against them, Righteousness, that is, the righteousness whereby we are accounted righteous before God, although some interpret it as mercy, which is justifying grace. Therefore Zion is brought back by the Spirit and by faith, and then the political administration is also restored. The Hebrews have no impersonal words, and in their place they use the third person plural. Thus in the Gospel we have ‘they shall give good measure’ (cf. Luke 6:38) instead of ‘it shall be given.’ Thus here we have ‘they shall restore’ instead of ‘it shall be restored’ ” (AE 16:25). (TLSB)

Those who turn, the repentant of Israel, are meant. To them is promised redemption. The NT redemption, which is simply the redemption for which Israel had been hoping from the beginning, is prophesied here. God will redeem Israel from all sins. Redemption is universal, but actually benefited are the penitent, who accept the same in faith. They are the redeemed of the Lord. Thus it is also often stated in the NT that God has loved and redeemed, won His church for Himself. (Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25) (Stoeckhardt)

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justifying grace. Therefore Zion is brought back by the Spirit and by faith, and then the political administration is also restored. The Hebrews have no impersonal words, and in their place they use the third person plural. Thus in the Gospel we have “they shall give good measure” (cf. Luke 6:38) instead of “it shall be given.” Thus here we have “they shall restore” instead of “it shall be restored.” (Luther)

1:28 *rebels and sinners shall be broken...consumed* – They missed God’s answer to sin – not just missed it, but rejected it. (PBC)

broken together. Judgment, experienced individually, affects all. *be consumed.* By God’s wrath (cf v 20). (TLSB)

The rebellious, the sinner who have forsaken the Lord and do not want to give up their evil disposition, will one and all perish. The threat of God’s revenge is taken here very generally and affects the rebellious of all ages. (Stoekhardt)

This explains what was said above about dross, that is, hypocritical, greedy, and evil magistrates shall rule no more. (Luther)

1:29 *oaks ... gardens.* Pagan sacrifices were offered and sexual immorality occurred at such places (see 65:3; 66:17). (CSB)

They engaged in the immoral rites of Canaanite worship, carried on in gardens and groves of trees (57:5; 2Ki 16:4). (TLSB)

In colorful gardens among shade trees idols were erected, idols were worshipped, festivals were celebrated by gorging, excessive drinking, and fornication. (Stoekhardt)

From this point on to end of the chapter attention is given to the idolaters within the nation. (LL)

Right in the middle of his discourse, Isaiah jumps from the third person to the second person and accuses also his people Judah-Jerusalem of idolatry. We know that under king Ahaz every conceivable heathen cult was welcomed in Jerusalem. Next to apostasy, murder, thievery, it was Jerusalem’s sin that it worshipped the gods of the heathen. These three things are always linked together: unbelief, apostasy; idolatry of all kinds; violence, deceit, gross breach of love of neighbor. However, one day when the hour of God’s vengeance and judgment draws nigh, idolaters will come to naught and be put to shame on account of their idols. False gods will then be unable to help them. (Stoekhardt)

Some translate with “by the trees” or “by the groves,” others with “by the oaks,”²⁸ which the Jews desired and which gave them pleasure. They planted and prepared them on every mountain (לָרֵק means oak, or tree) and on pleasant hills, and next to them they erected altars and idols. They did everything with great zeal and at great expense. They established new kinds of worship in opposition to God after forsaking the temple in imitation of their fathers and of the Gentiles. They sought piety according to their own feelings. (Luther)

1:30 *leaf withers...garden without water* – This is sad end and just punishment for idolaters. They will ultimately resemble a terebinth (A small tree of the Mediterranean region that yields a liquid resembling turpentine.) which is unable to produce leaves, whose leaves have withered, and a garden without water. One day the rebellious, after they have gratified their desires for a

little while, will stand there bleak and forsaken. They will live in want and pine away. They will hunger and thirst into all eternity. (Stoeckhardt)

Not a literal drought, but a simile for the loss of personal goods. (TLSB)

1:31 *strong shall become tinder* – These are very beautiful comparisons. They mean that one cannot resist the wrath and the scourge of God. It is easy to set tow on fire, but it is hard to put the fire out. Thus it will be impossible to hinder the scourge of God. “Strong,” or יָדָן in Hebrew, refers to the idol in the grove, just as above (v. 24) God was called “strong” and “of Israel.” Thus for the idol they devised names belonging to a deity. But the idol itself will become ashes together with its maker; or it means in general the princes and all the magistrates and heads of households to whom He threatens destruction and a burning until they are pure, both the household economy and the state. (Luther)

The self-sufficient also faced judgment. Wealth, strength, or status cannot save. (TLSB)

his work a spark – That is, government and power together with attendants. The shepherd together with the flock. A remnant will be preserved, as stated above (v. 9). It is more pleasant and agreeable to endure discipline from God than from men, as David experienced. He said: “When Thou art angry, Thou wilt remember mercy” (cf. Heb. 3:2; Ps. 65:3), but especially toward those who know Him. (Luther)

The idol scintillates. Fire is coming out of it. And this fire destroys the idolater. He burns like flax. Here meant is the fire of judgment. Both the idolater and his idol will go up in flames. Idolaters will endure anguish. And this torment and anguish will be all the more severe because then the idols, the objects of their sinful pleasure and affection, have taken hold of them. And this fire will never be extinguished. Everlasting anguish and torment – this is the final lot of idolaters. (Stoeckhardt)

1:21–31 The Lord describes Jerusalem’s injustice but plans for its justification. In our sinfulness, we stand as God’s enemies. However, rather than utterly destroy us, He longs to purify us by His righteousness. • Melt away, O Lord, the imperfections of my heart, that sincerity of faith may remain and serve Your graciousness. Amen. (TLSB)