Isaiah 1:1-31

Vss. 1-3

- The theme of chapter 1 is an indictment against the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Just as Job made charges against God, here it is the Deity who brings charges in the language of a lawsuit against the people. The Hebrew people, He says, are dumber than an ox, for an ox at least knows its master. In this first chapter, the prophet speaks of how religion is worthless without morality being at its center. He calls for repentance, tells of a coming judgement, and promises redemption for those who repent.
- Verse 1 introduces the entire book. We are introduced to Isaiah and his father and are pointed to the initial target audience, the kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. As we said in the introduction, Isaiah's family must have been important for him to have such access to the palace. There is an old teaching of the rabbis that his father Amoz was the brother of King Amaziah, the father of King Uzziah, but there is no biblical support for this. Further, the opening gives us a time span of Isaiah's preaching, the reign of four kings of Judah covering the second half of the 8th Century BC.
- But note that all the contents of the book have the prophet relating a divine vision that he ***saw***, suggesting that what Isaiah was given was both auditory and visual, just as John's Revelation would be centuries later.
- The book was already known to the writer of 2 Chronicles, where in 32:32 as he comes to the reign of Hezekiah, he writes, "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his deeds of devotion, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel."

Vss. 4-9

- This section opens with a countdown of sorts: nation, people, offspring, sons. This introduces the idea that that the whole of Judah, down to each individual, is "weighed down with iniquity". They have abandoned, even despised, the Holy One of Israel, Isaiah's favorite name for God, occurring some 26 times in the book.
- From the top of the head to the sole of the foot, the nation of Judah is sick and the description sounds remarkably like Job.
- Jerusalem is the "daughter of Zion" who is isolated and empty as a watchman's hut. Judah is surviving only out of God's mercy.

Vss. 10-17

- People never change. Here Judah is condemned for living like Sodom and Gomorrah while still going through the ritual practices of the faith, as if how you live on one hand

and your faith and worship on the other are completely unrelated. God will not even hear the people as they spread out their hands in prayer, for their hands are covered in blood.

- God requires that the people repent and live righteously. (vss. 16-17)

Vss. 18-23

- "'Come now and let us reason together', say the Lord." And here's the "reasoning". If Judah consents and obeys, they will be blessed. If they refuse and rebel, they will be "devoured by the sword." Then again examples of Judah's rebellion are given: Jerusalem, once faithful, has become a harlot and her rulers are rebellious, irresponsible thieves.

Vss. 24-31

- Here God speaks directly to Jerusalem and the extent of the "cleansing" that is coming to the city. (Vs. 27-28) "Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness. But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together and those who forsake the Lord will come to an end." The city will be scrubbed with a spiritual lye.
- Judah seems to have been infected with Canaanite fertility cults that often included immoral practices under a tree or in a garden. Thus the people practicing this will perish like as trees and gardens do.
- The word "redeemed" in vs. 27 literally means to be spared from death by a substitute or by a price. The word is only used 4 times in the book and three times in the Psalms to suggest being saved or delivered. Christ is our substitute on the cross and is our deliverer from sin and death.