

The Charges Against Israel - Isaiah 1:1-31

I. *Within the Literary Context*

Disobedience and Desolation – Isaiah 1

Vision of Future Restoration and Glory – Isaiah 2-4

Approaching Destruction of Judah – Isaiah 5

Calling of Isaiah – Isaiah 6

Approaching Destruction of Judah – Isaiah 7:1 - 8:18

Vision of Future Restoration – Isaiah 8:19 - 11:9

Obedience and Restoration – Isaiah 11:19 - 12:6

II. *Literary Construction of Chapter One*

Israel's Rebellion (1:2-4)

Israel's Current Devastation (1:5-9)

Condemnation of Rulers and Murderers (1:10-15)

Center: Repent! (1:16-20)

Condemnation of Rulers and Murderers (1:21-23)

Current Devastation Reversed (1:24-27)

Israel's Rebellion (1:28-31)

III. *What We Learn*

A. From the Primary Structure: Israel is unclean (ritually) and “undone”

(“disintegration”), the subject of woe (*oy*), and must be cleansed to fulfill its mission.

B. From the Limited Structure: Israel is in rebellion and must repent to avoid disintegration by God's judgment.

IV. *A Closer Look*

A. This is Law Court Language – 1:18

B. Each Section is part of the Covenant Law Suit that God brings against Israel. Isaiah 1:2

1. He will declare the case (recall Deuteronomy 27-28)

2. He will call witnesses (Deuteronomy 4:26; 29-31)

C. Each Section

1. vv. 2-4

a. children in rebellion: “They” is emphatic – “they of all people!”

b. flagrant rebellion – willful flouting: 1 Kings 12:19

c. result: “corruption” – spoil and ruin.

d. The Holy One of Israel – holiness as a primary theme in Isaiah: the phrase occurs 25 times in Isaiah and only seven in the remainder. “Holy” occurs 33 times in Isaiah with 26 in the remainder of the OT.

2. vv. 5-9

a. the body if Israel is infected with a sickness

b. the sickness is fatal

i. foolishness – the child who refuses to learn by the rod of correction

ii. descent into Sodom and Gomorrah - a place from which there is no escape from judgment (except for a remnant); see Genesis 18-19

3. 1:10-15
 - a. What is only at first regarded as possible is in fact reality already – v. 10 (this is not unusual in prophetic language: “the time is coming and now is...”; or in Jeremiah, “if you will not listen, and indeed I know you are not listening...”)
 - b. God’s rejection of their worship – vv. 11-15
 - i. Right worship rejected by God because of wrong hearts.
 - ii. From sacred assembly to “trampling of courts”
 - iii. The Law is given in Israel’s covenant structure prior to the Ritual; thus the worship ritual is given to those who have already said amen to the moral obligations of the covenant. The unholy alliance of religious observance and personal/institutional evil will not be allowed to stand. Note Jeremiah 7:11 and Matthew 21-23.
4. 1:16-20
 - a. The three aspects of repentance –
 - i. Stop!
 - ii. Learn
 - iii. Seek
 - b. The alternative – “eaten by the sword” – an invading army will destroy them (and Sennacherib is just around the corner!). Note Ezekiel 5:5 on Israel’s strategic location and its ministry to the nations or subjection to the nations.
5. 1:21-23
 - a. Spiritual adultery – note James on “friendship with the world”
 - b. This is seen in false worship – idolatry. Hence, the prophecy of Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah. The Bride has become a whore. This same imagery is used by Jeremiah as well.
 - c. We should note that this is BOTH personal and civil. The body is sick from head to toe, but the sickness starts in the head.
6. 1:24-27
 - a. The adulterous wife is now viewed as an arch enemy that God must destroy. Please note Romans 5 and the description there of our helpless and rebellious estate apart from Christ.
 - b. Love Judges and Purifies
 - i. Purifying Fires – Malachi 3:1-4
 - ii. A recurrent theme in Isaiah and the prophets: Isaiah 4:4; Matthew 3:11-12
7. 1:28-31
 - a. The Oaks of Yahweh – Isaiah 61:1 ff
 - b. (OR) The Oaks of Idolatry – withered and burned - You will become like what you worship – Psalm 115