

Criticism and Comfort

Isaiah 1:1 – 2:5

Where are we in the Bible now?

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- The Prophets

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- The Major Prophets – in the English Bible
 - **Isaiah**
 - Jeremiah and Lamentations
 - Ezekiel
 - Daniel

Where are we in the Bible now?

- The Latter Prophets – in the Hebrew Bible
 - **Isaiah**
 - Jeremiah
 - Ezekiel
 - The Twelve = the Minor Prophets all in one book

Where are we in the Bible now?

- *As a group, the Latter Prophets provide the canon with an interpretation of the history that has already been described in the Law and the Former Prophets ... Israel's consistent rebellion against God produces judgment, but a remnant of faithful persons who never turn away from the Lord will always exist.*

– Paul R. House



Where are we in the Bible now?

- The books of prophecy can seem complicated.
- There are three main topics:
 1. Rebellion
 2. Results
 3. Restoration – accomplished through the faithful remnant.

Criticism and Comfort

Introduction

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Isaiah's Major Characters:

- Isaiah
- Yahweh
- King Ahaz of Judah
- King Hezekiah of Judah
- Israel's Remnant
- Assyria
- Babylon

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3. God then comforts Judah yet threatens a future Babylonian invasion.

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3. God then comforts Judah yet threatens a future Babylonian invasion.
4. God ultimately redeems persons from many nations through the work of the coming son of David.

Criticism and Comfort Introduction

Isaiah the Prophet:

- A very long ministry – 40 to 50 years.
- Educated (aristocratic?) background – had personal access to the kings in Jerusalem.
- His book is excellent literature and is deeply theological.
- He lived to see the fall of the northern Kingdom of Israel.

Criticism and Comfort Introduction

Once again, our three main topics of prophecy

1. Rebellion
2. Results
3. Restoration

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:1

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- This shows the long ministry of Isaiah.
- Again, he was active for 40 – 50 years.

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:2-4

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- The topic here is clearly rebellion.
- Israel doesn't appreciate their special relationship with the Lord.
- This leads them into open national sin.

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:5-9

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- This passage shows us the results of persistent, national sin.
- The “few survivors” in v.9 are the remnant we spoke of earlier.
- The restoration of the nation is based upon the godly remnant that eventually returns.

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:10-11

Criticism and Comfort **Isaiah 1:10-11**

- God compares the nation to Sodom and Gomorrah.
- This is not a compliment.
- But notice their persistent religiosity.

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:12-17

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:12-17

- The constant practice of religion combined with corruption throughout society.
- The “fatherless and widows” are the most vulnerable members of society.

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:18-20

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- The themes of rebellion results and restoration all appear in these three verses.
- **1:18** is a verse worth remembering.

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Isaiah 1:21-23

Criticism and Comfort **Isaiah 1:21-23**

- This illustrates the nation's rebellion.
- Everyone is selfish and the most vulnerable members of society are ignored.
- God portrays Israel as an unfaithful wife.

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Isaiah 1:24-31

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 1:24-31

- The themes here alternate between the results of rebellion and restoration.

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 2:1-5

Criticism and Comfort Isaiah 2:1-5

- Here the theme is clearly restoration.
- These are prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled.
- The theme that the Lord will become the God of all nations takes us back to God's blessing of Abraham.

Criticism and Comfort **Isaiah 2:1-5**



and they shall beat their
swords into plowshares,
and their spears into
pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up
sword against nation,
neither shall they learn
war anymore.

– Isaiah
at Ralph Bunche Park
across from the U.N., NYC

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Conclusions

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- Israel tried to hide her rebellion with a veneer of religious hypocrisy.
- Their religion might have been sincere at a sentimental level, but it never led to a change of heart.

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Conclusions



The only remedy for the situation of Jerusalem is a genuine return to the Lord, which will involve far more than just religious rituals. Such rituals can fool others into thinking we are in a right relationship with God, but God can see through hypocrisy.

*– Edouard Kitoko Nsiku,
South African Theological Seminary*

Criticism and Comfort

Conclusions



What he requires is not rituals but a sanctified life, manifested in love for one's neighbour. This love must be shown in our economic and political behaviour, as well as in our religious behaviour.

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Criticism and Comfort Conclusions

- God viewed Israel as an unfaithful wife.
- Jesus called the people of his day “an adulterous generation” (Matt. 16:4, Mark 8:38) even though they also were outwardly religious.

Criticism and Comfort Conclusions

- We have to be careful that our outward practice of Christianity is not a cover for a hypocritical life.

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Conclusions

- Sin is ultimately self-destructive.
- The judgment that came upon Israel and Judah could have been avoided – but it wasn't.
- It was the result of the depth and persistence of their rebellion.

Criticism and Comfort Conclusions

- Ultimately, restoration is God's goal.
- Jesus is looking for those who will turn in repentance to him.
- You and I can be part of the faithful remnant.

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Conclusions

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Criticism and Comfort Conclusions

- For this week:
 1. Look for a way to be faithful to God when no one is looking. **This is a cure for hypocrisy.**
 2. Look for a thing that is consuming your thoughts and find a way to make it less consuming. **This is a cure for idolatry.**
 3. Look for a vulnerable person and be their advocate. **This is a cure for society's injustice.**