
History and Prophecy

Part 7

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The basic idea of this series of articles is the premise that in order to really understand prophecy, you must understand the historical context in which the prophecy was given. This is not to say that these prophecies are not 'end time' prophecies and that they do not have enormous 'end time' significance. We have already seen that, and we will see it again very clearly, but frankly I feel that a great many people in their study of prophecy have arrived at some far-out interpretations because they have not understood the historical context.

Why Look At Europe?

Some people, for example, have often ask us, why it is that we look at Europe instead of the middle east, as the seat of the beast power. I think it was Nostradamus in his prophecies as they are interpreted who speculated that an individual who seems to be the 'man of sin', the beast power, the antichrist, seems to make the antichrist into an Islamic power, an Arab.

Why then do we continually place that whole concept into a European context, for indeed the very idea of the antichrist or anti-Christian type of person, a 'man of sin' at the 'end time', certainly would lead one to believe that he would be outside of the Christian world and where no better to look than to the Islamic world, whose religion includes the idea of making war and conquest of spreading of their religion.

It is, I must confess, logical but it is utterly without any historical reference.

The reason we look to Europe is because of our understanding of the history which lies behind so much of prophecy and of Daniel's prophecies of the image that he saw which had a head of gold, breast of silver and a belly of brass and legs and thighs of iron, and finally the feet mixed with iron and clay. The whole image of that beast shows that this is a single, continuing, world power that has a certain unity about it, that will exist from Daniel's day until it is finally destroyed by the returning Christ. Now that interpretation is very common to all Christian interpreters, and you'll find it in almost any explanation of the book of Daniel.

And so consequently we have down through the years followed the history of the Babylonian kingdom, as it passed on into the Medo-Persia Empire, the Greco Macedonian Empire and finally coming to the Roman Empire as it continued down through to its seeming dissolution and

then through its revivals, all of which keep us firmly stuck in Europe. That's why we keep looking at Europe. It is because of the historical perspective in prophecy.

Prophecy Can Fail

Now we are not married to any interpretation of prophecy. Paul said in First Corinthians 13:8 "Whether there be prophecies, they will fail" There are two reasons why prophecies can fail. One is, we construct this interpretation in our mind of what the prophecy is and our interpretation turns out to be wrong. The other reason is because all prophecy is conditional.

Jeremiah in his 18th chapter makes that very clear. He said in verse 8 "If a nation against whom I have pronounced evil repent of the evil it is doing, I'll repent of the evil that I plan to do to them and it will not come to pass."

The entire book of Jonah is a classic illustration of a prophecy that failed, of how he came, and he prophesied saying "Forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown". You could never ask for a clearer prophecy. And yet 40 days passed, and Nineveh was not overthrown because Nineveh repented.

So, prophecies can fail because they are conditional. They also fail more often, because you and I did not understand them. In other words, our idea of the prophecy fails because we misinterpreted, or we drew our interpretation out of midair. Many people read through the prophecies and they begin to construct an imaginary edifice and they can make all the pieces fit quite well. Sometimes they can put together rather impressive prophetic schemes.

I feel, though, an important concept, an important key to understanding prophecy and evaluating any scheme of prophecy that anyone advances is to ask "Where are its roots in history? Where is it founded? Is it just something that we put together that sounds good to us?"

Some have speculated that the ten northern tribes would become the beast power because there were ten of them and they made the association with the ten northern tribes and the ten nations in the 'end time'. That may sound very good but the only thing it really has is the number ten in two different places, and that's just not enough.

What I have been advancing is the idea that these prophecies are in the Bible for us to understand.

Historical Background

The historical background of these prophets, where they were, where they came from, and what they said and to whom they said it, and why they said it, and when you understand this, you are positioned then, to understand what will take place in the 'end time'. Without that, you are not properly positioned, and you may not be seeing what you think you are seeing.

Isaiah made this abundantly clear. In Isaiah chapter 41 and verse 22 he said concerning the false prophets and false gods, "Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them

show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and understand the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come."

It is as clear a statement as anyone could ever want that the understanding of the latter fulfillment of prophecy depends on understanding the former things.

For that reason, I have tried to take some time to lay the groundwork, in which I started out from the beginning of that segment of history, which begins with the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon when the ten northern tribes split off from Judah, and began a separate existence in the north, and they changed the fundamentals of their worship. They divorced themselves from the Temple, they divorced themselves from God's Holy Days and they apparently divorced themselves according to Hosea, from the Sabbath as well, and they began to go in a totally different direction in their worship. The nation became corrupt and this is what led to the introduction of the first prophets who began to write, Amos, Hosea, and of course, another gentleman of whom we are coming to today, one of most powerful, if not the most powerful of all the writing prophets.

In second Kings Chapter 15, we had come up to and dealt with Hosea and Amos and a king that we called Jeroboam the second. He's not designated as Jeroboam the second in the Bible, he just happens to be the second Jeroboam mentioned here. The first Jeroboam was the one who corrupted the religious worship in the north and he was the first king in the northern kingdom

Jeroboam the second comes much later.

Azariah Reigns in Judah

2 Kings 15:1 "In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah king of Judah began to reign." This is 177 years into the divided kingdom.

In this series of articles up to this point, most of the attention has been given to Israel, because Israel corrupted themselves first, they turned away from the worship of God to the worship of idols before Judah did. And so consequently the prophets were directed toward Israel first. And that's why in this sequence of events we dealt with Israel first.

Now however we are going to turn our attention to Judah.

Azariah, otherwise known as Uzziah reigned from the 177th year to the 229th year. A long reign of 52 years that king Uzziah actually reigned in Judah.

We are told in verse two that he was "Sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. {3} And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done; {4} Except that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places. {5} And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death and dwelt in a separate house. And Jotham the king's son was over the house, judging the

people of the land. {6} And the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?"

Isaiah and the Messiah

During the reign of Azariah, a young man appeared, he must've been a young man, because his prophecies spans such a long period of time. This young man appeared on the scene and his work has the most literary merit of all of them, he is without question the most powerful of all in the writing prophets. His name is Isaiah.

Isaiah is probably the most popular of all the prophets, because here is the man who introduces the idea of the Messiah. He never uses the word 'Messiah', interestingly enough. When you get your concordance out and go the word 'Messiah', you will only find it in two places in the entire Bible where it is used, and both are in the book of Daniel.

It is strange when you think about an all-pervasive concept of the Messiah and that the word is only used twice in your King James version of the Bible. But you see the concept of the Messiah is found sprinkled throughout the Bible, all the way back to the book of Genesis in the promises made to Adam and Eve, so the idea is there.

Isaiah has been called the Jesus Prophet, because of the fact that his prophecies, more than any other, are those that underlie the ministry of Jesus Christ, and what He was to do, what He was to accomplish and what His saving message would be. Isaiah is the one who lays out so much of Jesus in his prophecies.

To me, in reading through these prophecies in Isaiah, it is extremely fascinating to see this man come on the scene in Judah at this time. By and large the people have not divorced themselves from the worship of God. The Temple was there, although there had been times in their history when the worship of God had fallen into incredible disuse. At one point the Temple was more like a museum and the priests were more like caretakers for the daily sacrifices were not done and the Festivals were no longer being kept.

In the northern kingdom, they had officially and nationally substituted a different festival on the 15th day of the eighth month, instead of the 15th day of the seven months. They apparently had a whole system of holidays that crept in, undoubtedly the feast days of Baal, which are identified by Hosea in his prophecies. But in Judah, this did not happen. I have little doubt that there were Jews in Judea at this time, who were keeping the pagan days, of one sort or another, but there had been no national adoption, no formalization of these pagan days in Judea, and consequently they had not gone as far as the northern kingdom did.

There was a time, though, when they lost sight of God so completely that when someone found a book of the Law in the Temple, it was almost an accident for they did not even know that it was there, they brought it out and blew the dust off and opened it up and found out about the Passover. And when they read it. They tore their garments, they cast dust upon their heads, and

they repented and immediately began to keep the Passover and then they realized that they had brought great wrath upon themselves and upon their children by the abandonment of the worship of God.

These are the people to whom Isaiah came. Judah had slowly corrupted herself, not the way Israel had done and not with the speed that Israel had done, but unfortunately in the long-term just as effectively as Israel had done.

Isaiah and His Prophecy

Turn over to the book of Isaiah with me.

At this point, we need to take a look at Isaiah and his prophecy. We don't really know a lot about Isaiah, practically nothing is known, as matter of fact, about Isaiah. There are various traditions of him, but they are no more than tradition and to the point of bordering on fairytales. The traditions of Isaiah say, that he prophesied for something over 45 years, and he was killed in the fifth year of the reign of King Manasseh of Judah, the next wicked king that comes on the scene, and his death being quite symbolic. It is said traditionally that he was sawn in to, dying a martyr's death. One tradition has it that he was tied between planks and sawn in to. Another that he had hidden in a hollow Mulberry tree from Manasseh, and he had the tree sawn in to with Isaiah in it.

A horrible thought but this is all speculation. We do not know how Isaiah died. There is one reference in Hebrews 11:37, and that is the only Biblical reference to those who served God being sawn asunder.

The Book Of Isaiah

Now the book of Isaiah is a very long book and I'm not going to go through the book of Isaiah today, that's utterly impossible. I want to introduce you to it only from the beginning of it, talking about the prophet, where he is, and the initial things he has to say. Now, in the first place he identifies his prophecy in Isaiah 1:1 "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."

It is speculated Isaiah lived into the reign of Manasseh, who followed Hezekiah, but no one knows for sure. It's interesting that he saw no vision in the days of Manasseh even though he may have lived into Manasseh's day. Manasseh was such an evil and wicked king, that it may very well be that God gave no vision in that particular time. He didn't send anyone to him. Enough warning had been given and at that time Isaiah had been shut down and not allowed to speak further to this man.

There is a long period of time, some 40 odd years, in fact, that we have different visions being given to Isaiah. These visions did not come all at one time.

Now interestingly enough, one thing you must always keep in mind about these prophets is that they do not always follow in strict time sequence. For example, we do not find information about Isaiah's call until we get all the way down to chapter 6 of Isaiah. So rather than going to chapter 1 through chapter 5 first, let's turn over to chapter 6, for it is here that we find much more about this man.

Isaiah's Calling

Isaiah 6:1 "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne."

Since Isaiah saw his first vision in the year that Uzziah died, this would indicate that Uzziah was still alive at the time he saw this vision, if this indeed is Isaiah's call.

Some commentators speculate that Isaiah may have seen visions prior to the vision that he saw in chapter 6. But the wording of it, leads one to feel that this is the initial call of Isaiah. He prophesied little during the reign of Uzziah if this is true.

Isaiah 6:1 "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. {2} Above it stood the seraphim's: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. {3} And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. {4} And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. {5} Then I said, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

What a fantastic response. This is one of the most moving chapters in the Bible to me to read as this man finds himself, not in fact, but in vision. Keep that distinction in mind. He fell into a trance. But he saw, just as vividly as you can see anyone standing before you and you can reach out and touch them. He saw, and he sensed the eternal God sitting on a throne, high and lifted up.

Notice that it is possible for a man to see God in vision and live. It is not possible for a man to look on God directly and live.

Isaiah Was Humble

Isaiah's response to me is fascinating. It is not an exalted response. It is not that I must've done something right for God is talking to me. It is not a response of personal self-righteousness, but a total collapse of his ego that took place at this moment in time. Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips, I am undone. I am finished. I am over. I have all of a sudden come into the presence of God.

I would hope that anyone who would come into the presence of God would feel undone. For indeed as Isaiah puts it "All of our righteousness is as filthy rags before God" (Isaiah 64:6). We are told that man in his best state is altogether vanity (Psalms 39:5).

Whenever you come into God's presence and are able to see Him or to be aware of Him, even in a vision, it would have to make a person so profoundly aware of his own inadequacies, of his own weakness, of his own sin and of his own credibility. This would almost have to be the reaction of one who has genuinely come into the presence of God.

Now there is all sorts of people that I have met in my lifetime, who have claimed to have had visions of God or angels. A peculiar thing about so many of these people is that these are ego trips for these people, rather than a reaction of humility. There is a strange difference.

I have never met a person who experienced the reaction of Isaiah. Not one! The ones that I have met were so proud of the experience, so puffed up by the experience, so holier than thou, as a result of the experiences that self-righteousness seems to have been the result, rather than the kind the humility expressed by Isaiah.

Isaiah 6:6 "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: {7} And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged. {8} I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Called to Preach

It's a feeling that any man who's come to the place where he feels that God has called him to preach must recognize. I can recall a very early time, when God was calling me to preach and my reluctance to do so, a hesitancy about the whole thing, a fear of going to preach. I can also recall a time in my life, where finally there was an experience of letting down, an experience of giving up, an experience of surrendering and finally acceptance and a willingness to say, "Lord hear am I, send me." It was a terrific transition that took place in my life when I was willing to make that kind of a statement to myself and I was still a long way from being of any value to God whatsoever at that point in my life. When I think about that and I see this man whose first reaction was that I am a man of unclean lips, woe is me, I am finished, I am undone. Only when God had cleansed him and he knew that God had cleansed him, then and only then, could he say "Here am I Lord, send me."

Isaiah 6:9 "He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear indeed, but don't understand; and see indeed, but don't perceive. {10} Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. {11} Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses be without man, and the land be utterly desolate, {12} And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land."

Now, any man who would believe, or has felt that he's been called to be a prophet, or who went forth to preach to people must certainly believe that his mission, his goal, that for which he is working, is to change people's lives. What is the most tremendous thing that can happen to a preacher as a result of preaching the message of God, of thundering out about God's impending

wrath or what God is going to do? What is the most gratifying thing that can happen? Repentance.

To see somebody, repent and have tears to appear in their eyes, to see the change take place in their life and see their face harden into a resolve that they are going to do better and to change their life. This is what is gratifying to a minister.

I don't know how I could set out with my goal, my mission having been given to me as a prophet to go to these people and say to these people, "Hear, but don't understand, see, but don't perceive, make this people's heart fat, gross and lazy." How would you feel about that? For indeed, if I were to think in terms of the message of the prophet, I would think in terms of Jonah, "Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown", and the whole city repents and turns back to God, and it doesn't take place.

The irony of the whole thing is that Jonah was unhappy with that result. Here is Isaiah who is given a job to go and preach and not bring about repentance.

Let's read it again. Where is the hope in this message?

Isaiah 6:9 "Go, and tell this people, Hear indeed, but don't understand; and see indeed, but don't perceive. {10} Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

How long? Until they are destroyed? No, not for 100 years and then I'll let them repent, but until they've gone into captivity. Then I will let them repent. Now that was what God said, and that is precisely what happened.

Isaiah's Message

Isaiah began to preach, and he had a message and we'll take a look at what his message was, because it is a profound message and a powerful message, and he himself was certainly not lacking in the eloquence to preach his message.

It is clear, and it seems plain and it has an incredible beauty about it even in the grimmest of passages and warnings. But nobody listened, and Judah went its way, and they continued on down the line toward eventual destruction and toward eventual captivity until they were gone. When they got into captivity, they were allowed to repent, 70 years, 70 years they were left in Babylon, before they were allowed finally to return to Jerusalem.

Now it is a sobering thing to think about setting out as a prophet and the objective given to you by God is to preach without being understood, to proclaim without repentance being expected, just to warn.

Ezekiel's Message

I have thought about that a lot, because Ezekiel's message and prophecies seem to be oriented in exactly the same direction, and you wonder, what's the purpose of sending a prophet, if people aren't to repent? Although they are to repent, but you see the problem with Israel, by the time we get to this point in their history, and the problem with Judah, is that they've repented before, they sinned again, and then went back into it and then they were chastised, and they repented again. And God said to Israel through Hosea "What am I going to do with you people? Your goodness is like the morning dew, I get up in the morning, dew is on the grass, but by the time 10 o'clock comes and the sun is out, and it's all gone. It just won't last. That's what your goodness is. They have gone around and around and finally God comes to the place where He says to His prophet, "You're going to continue to prophesy, but they're not going to repent. They're not going to return." Other prophecies make it clear that He has made their heart gross and fat, and they wouldn't hear. God is the one who has blocked their understanding.

For indeed you and I can read Isaiah and understand what he is saying as clear as a bell, it rings, it is plain. So, his prophecies do not seem hidden to us, do they? Because we have the advantage of history in our favor, and we weren't the people who were living in sin and being condemned by his preaching at the time it was being given. We were not the people whom God had blinded. Why would He do that?

The answer seems to be that people do not realize what the stakes are until everything they have has been swept away. Then finally, they can come down to the place where it is just them and God and they can think objectively about what it all means.

Someone once said, a man never thinks clearer at any time in his life as in those few moments just before he's facing certain death. There's nothing like it to make you think totally with absolute clarity at that moment in time. Maybe that's what God saw that Israel had come to. For some of us, it may mean death and a resurrection to judgment, to being able at that point in time, having been through all that to be able to say, "Yes, I understand."

Ezekiel's message was very simple. All these things are going to happen to these people. When they have happened then they will know that I am God. The whole objective seems to be that I can preach these things to these people, and a lot of them would repent, and we could get all of this right again and we could go on for another ten or fifteen years until they corrupt themselves again and we'll be right back where we were.

But somehow or other, we have got to go through this whole exercise before people are really going to come down to the point to where it is man, and his God. Not complicated by other people, not complicated by his job or by his physical property and not complicated by his children or his wife and not complicated by anything, not even complicated by his clothes. Just a naked man and God, and maybe God says at that point in time, "We can begin now to talk some sense to Israel."

Isaiah 6:13 "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so, the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

God is going to bring back just a few people, and He says a tithe, back into the land of what was originally theirs.

Now that's frightening in and of itself, to realize that nine out of ten of them would not be able to survive what was going to be taking place in the time ahead.

Here Am I, Lord

Now I want you to turn back to the first chapter of Isaiah, having understood Isaiah's call, and Isaiah's commission that he was a man who was a man of unclean lips. He was not a particularly righteous person, he was not a person whose lifestyle that you would necessarily admire. But there came a point when he was called. He was set apart by God. He was purged or cleansed by God and He said, "Now that I've done this who's going to go?" Isaiah said, "Here am I, Lord, send me", and God did.

His message was a sobering one. It was a "Hear but don't understand message", It was a "See but don't perceive message."

Now the first five chapters of Isaiah leading up to his commission seems to have been written much later. I have very little doubt that they were, because of the events that seem to be described in them, but we can't tell that for sure. I think they were written by Isaiah some years subsequent to his call, placed at the beginning of his book as a sort of prologue, for they do not follow the simple, chronological sequence of prophetic events at all. It's more of a song or poem or lamentation, an exhortation laid out in a rather interesting style. If you'd like to see the interesting construction of this section, you can study Bullinger's Companion Bible because he has laid out the introversion's that take place in the way the thing is designed, all of which goes to show, a very conscious design on God's part.

Prologue to Isaiah

In Isaiah chapters 1 through 5 is the prologue. Isaiah 1:1 "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. {2} Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. {3} The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, my people do not consider."

It is a sober beginning because you're asked to hearken back to the fact that God says, "I have nourished and brought up children." Through Ezekiel, he will draw a little different analogy. He will speak of a baby that was expelled from his mother's body and left lying in a ditch not even severed from the placenta, covered with blood and in no way washed and in no way cared for.

This, God says through Ezekiel, is Israel, He says He came by you and I covered you, I picked you up, and I washed you and salted you and everything that was done was done for her that could be done. And He says He brought her up and He took care of her and fed her and the time came when she grew up and I passed by and it was the time of love and I cast my spirit over you and you became mine and I married you and you became my wife and he draws his beautiful

description of one who had nothing, who except for God, would've been dead. The comparison is plain to us that it was Israel who was in slavery in Egypt and in total filth, absolute degradation and poverty, with no hope whatsoever, and God went down and brought them out of Egypt, and He gave them His Law, cleaned them up and He brought them up to the promised land, and He promised to defeat their enemies before them. He led them in the daytime by a cloud, and by night time a pillar of fire to show them the way that they were to go toward the promised land. They saw miracle after miracle after miracle.

Where were there a people who should not have known their God? He said I've nourished them and brought up children and they have rebelled against me and He says an ox knows his master, how come Israel doesn't know me? Intelligent people, human beings, walking around on two legs, who can plan and devise and build houses and put together armies and organize themselves. Oxen knows their masters, but Israel doesn't know. All of those years of their existence they had seen God's power repeatedly. God had sent them prophets and they killed some of them and tortured others. He had tried in every way to make them understand and for some reason, they just wouldn't.

The more I study the Law of God the more I grasp the things that God revealed to Israel. I understand what a great Law it was. Without an understanding of history again, without knowing the setting in which that Law was given, without knowing the kind of world in which Israel walked and lived, you wouldn't appreciate how glorious that Law was.

Isaiah 1:4 "Ah sinful nation, a people loaded with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward. {5} Why should you be stricken anymore? you will revolt more and more: 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 wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

What he is saying by this is that I have chastised you down through time. If I could only get you to go in the right direction. You have wounds, and nobody even ties them up. Nobody puts any ointment on them. In modern language, why hasn't somebody stitched this thing up or tried to put some antibiotics on it to keep it from getting infected? They just seem to live on in their corruption.

Isaiah 1:7 "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. {8} And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

This little segment right through here is a vivid image of what took place when the Assyrians came in. They invaded the ten northern tribes and destroyed the city of Samaria and came in and straight on toward Judah as well at that time, but Jerusalem did not fall. Jerusalem was a besieged lodge, like a cottage in the garden of cucumbers, and these cucumbers represented the Assyrians.

He says all these things have happened to you along the way, and then comes the words spoken from Isaiah.

Isaiah 1:9 "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

This prophecy, the way it is stated almost seems to imply that it was written later. As I said it was written down anticipating the siege of Jerusalem that took place under the Assyrians long before Jerusalem fell.

Then they said We would've been like Sodom and like Gomorrah, and now God then transfers that then to Israel, and then He says in verse 10: "Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah."

God is not talking to Sodom and Gomorrah, He is talking to Jerusalem, but what He is doing here, is that He is taking those words, Sodom and Gomorrah that they used, and then throwing it right back at them and saying, "Surely you are like Sodom and Gomorrah, you have become that corrupt."

One of things I'm struck by, as I read through this prophecy, is some of the remarkable parallels that do exist in the United States and Great Britain, Australia today, and the way things were in Israel at that time.

For indeed these prophecies do fit. There's one thing you need to understand, it is a sobering thing to reflect on. We have not gotten to the point, yet that Israel and Judah had arrived at when these prophecies were prophesied. I don't really think we have, for indeed everyone once in a while in this country, you still see a spark or a glimmer of morality. You still see people who are willing to help their neighbor, and you still see a surge back toward God and a reaction against some of the evil that begins to build up in our society. But it cycles back and forth. The whole direction is not encouraging.

Israel and Judah had become Corrupt

The sobering thing to me is that as I read through these prophecies, I realize just how corrupt Israel and Judah had become, even to the point of burning their own children alive in the fire to other gods, and I realize, that that lies ahead of us. Not necessarily burning our children alive in the fires of the gods, but the mentality, the corruption that lies ahead of us if we continue spiraling our way down.

We could actually be headed for the same sort of corrupt society of which we read about here in Isaiah 1:10, that God would speak to us and say, "Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. {11} To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. {12} When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my

courts? {13} Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot stand it; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

Now why is that? How could God be unhappy when they were continuing to observe the things that he'd given them to do? He hasn't told us yet, perhaps He will?

Isaiah 1:14 "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them. {15} And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear you."

Why? When they went into the Temple, washed and clean and purified ceremonially, they would raise their hands to God to pray, but what God saw on their hands was innocent blood. They were murderers, they were liars, they were hypocrites. They stomped all over His law during the week and then they came to appear before Him on the Sabbath as though they were His people. This is why! It isn't because God had anything against burnt offerings of rams, He was the one that instituted all of this. He didn't see anything wrong with people coming into His court, or coming to the Temple to pray, or keeping the Sabbath or new moons.

It wasn't that these things were wrong. It is that they were hypocrites. This is what Jesus spoke of when He said, "In vain do you worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

They were a people who would fast twice a week and give tithes of all that they possessed, who observed the Sabbath, much more diligently than any of us. They were very careful to be obedient to God and in the letter of the law. But they were hypocrites, their heart was not right with God.

This is a very sobering thing to realize, how possible it is for you to get all the mechanics of the worship of God right, but because you harbor hatred in your heart or because you're a liar or a cheat or a thief, because you sin then God says you're a hypocrite.

God doesn't want all this worship, this outward form, which is just so much corruption.

Symbolism

Now there is one thing that has been very sobering to me, as I study through the prophets, it is the awareness of symbolism, how that certain words don't mean what they say, they mean something entirely different. An example is the word 'mountain' in Scripture oftentimes means a mountain but sometimes it does not, sometimes it means nation. The word 'house' sometimes means a place you go into and sleep at night but many times it means a dynasty or a ruling family. The context often times determines exactly what some of these words mean.

What has struck me so many times is that the New Testament prophets see Israel and the city of Jerusalem as a type of the Church, and sometimes you can actually see little hints in the prophets that lead you to almost wonder if some of these prophets in an 'end time' application may apply as much to the Church as they ever applied to ancient Israel or to the city of Jerusalem.

Why are You Calling Me Lord?

It's a frightening thing for you and me to consider here that we can come to appear before God on His Sabbath day and assemble together for fellowship and to hear His word preached and we think we are obeying God's Law. We stop work at sunset on Friday and we don't start working again till Saturday night and sometimes we're very religious about our observance of the Sabbath day.

We can do all these things and be part of the Church, and we can come to Christ at some time along the way and say "Lord" and He says "Why are you calling me Lord, when you don't do the things that I say" (Matthew 7:22-23), and you say "Well, I prayed to you and kept Your Sabbath, and I kept Your annual festivals" and He is going to say "Depart from me, I never knew you."

Could that happen? Yes, yes it could! We all know that, and it is hard for us to get our minds around it. We know what the difference is, we know it has to do with a lot of things with Jesus teachings about our responsibility for our fellow man, about our love for the brethren, about our care for one another, about our honesty in our dealings with one another, about cleaning up our lives.

All of this is very important, just as important as keeping the Holy Days. Just as important as tithing, and just as important as in so many religious exercises, the only difference is, they are just harder to do. It is a lot harder to love your neighbor than it is to keep the Sabbath. It's a lot tougher than it is to tithe. To tithe all you have to do is sit down and write a check for 10% of your income and it's easy, compared to some of the things that Jesus demands of his disciples.

Stop Doing Evil

Isaiah 1:16 "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; stop doing evil; {17} Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. {18} Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. {19} If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: {20} But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

What's required for all this to happen? Wash yourself up. Cleanup your life. Straighten up your act, put away the evil of your doings. Stop doing evil and learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Substance and Form

All these things are the substance of your religion. All of these other things are the form of your religion. Now frankly religion without form tends to lose its meaning. The one that has form and no substance is no religion at all. It seems like so much of the world has great difficulty understanding this. There are so many people who give so much attention to form and they become totally absorbed in the form of their religion and methodology of their religion, and

they'll argue with you about it till the cows come home. They can get involved in debates with you and be persuasive and study the Greek words and know all these things about form.

Then there's another group of people who try their best to practice the substance of their religion. They make very good neighbors and they are the kind of people I like when I am broken down in my car, because they would stop and would take care of you or give you a lift, but they feel that that's all there is to it, to take care of their fellow man is enough. They turn around and absolutely ignore the worship of their God.

There should be form and substance in our religion. I certainly feel that it may be much more tolerable in the day of judgment for the man who goes out and stops and takes care of his neighbor, who is a good Samaritan, than it is for the man who is a good Pharisee, and who has all the form right, but will not take care of the substance.

I would rather be the person who worships God in the way that God wants to be worshiped and to follow the form of religion so that I might learn more about God and draw closer to Him and also be the person who is a good Samaritan.

How does the Faithful City become a Harlot?

Isaiah 1:21 "How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. {22} Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water: {23} your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: everyone loves gifts, and follows after bribes or rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come to them."

You know I have to think about this for if I would not apply this to me it would be just so many words. How can I apply this to me? I can look at the church as having been a faithful city and I can admit to myself that a given church could have been at one time faithful to God could turn around and become a harlot.

What does God consider being a harlot? When God speaks about harlotry, He is not so much speaking of prostitution, He is speaking about spiritual harlotry and He means basically going after other gods, worshiping other gods and trying to worship Him the way other gods were worshiped, which He considers perverse.

Verse 23 indicates that the people they hung around with were thieves. Everyone loves gifts and follows after rewards. I can see how the leadership of a church could have that creep upon them, where the financial rewards of being involved as a minister, if they got to great and if they could even be greater. I think a person could begin to pursue and follow after the money to the point that you would neglect judging the fatherless and taking care of the widows.

Isaiah 1:24 "Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies: {25} And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin: {26} And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning: afterward you shalt be called, The

city of righteousness, the faithful city. {27} Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. {28} And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. {29} For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired."

What does that mean? The planting of oaks in groves was a method of worshiping other gods.

Continuing in verse 29 "You shall be confounded for the gardens that you have chosen. {30} For you shall be as an oak whose leaf fades, and as a garden that hath no water. {31} And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and nobody shall quench them."

Now all these things that we have studied up to this point, in this book, apply to Jerusalem and Judah in about the seventh century BC, to that particular part of the world. They grow out of a definite clear-cut and historical context that you and I can learn lessons from. The prophecies don't seem to be specifically directed toward the 'end time' today, do they? They seem to be much more oriented toward a specific historical situation. Now it's not difficult for you to see, if you could somehow understand or demonstrate that there was a typology involved and that Jerusalem of old was a type of something at the end time, and perhaps Jerusalem at the end time, then you could see some very clear-cut warnings that might be seen.

Let Us Reason Together

Now of course, as I've said before, the principles that are involved in it could apply to a person, to the church, to the nation. I don't know how many preachers I've heard, Baptist, Methodist Presbyterian or what have you, cite this Scripture "Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, and they shall be as white as snow." So, they reach back into the first chapter of Isaiah, put that right into the twenty-first century and apply it to their congregation. So, we all know how that can be done.

The Last Days

But the second chapter of Isaiah is a problem in this regard. I want to show you where the problem is.

Isaiah 2:1 "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. {2} And it shall come to pass in the last days."

What are we to construe from this term 'the last days'? From our perspective, we haven't got there yet, and certainly it didn't take place in Isaiah's lifetime or since the time of Christ. Those were not the last days, were they? And so consequently, the collapse of Jerusalem and the restoration of Israel back into the land, and when the Jews went back to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple cannot fulfill Isaiah the second chapter, those were not the last days and we are still here.

So, this prophecy says it shall come to pass in the last days, "That the mountain of the Lord's house." What in the world does that sentence mean? That sentence, 'the mountain of the Lord's house', taken literally, is nonsense. Now any student of the Bible understands that the word 'mountain', and it's a simple thing and I am not going to take you to a lot of Scriptures. All you need is a concordance and look up the word 'mountain' and the word 'house' and you'll see what I mean. The word 'mountain' means nation and the word 'house' means dynasty or ruling family, and so the verse means that "It shall come to pass in the last days that the nation of the Lord's ruling family shall be established above all of the nations and shall be exalted above all the hills and more little nations and all nations shall flow unto it, shall submit to it."

Then he shifts gears out of the prophetic language of mountain into the simple word nation. Why he does that specifically, I can't tell. It's possible, however, that many of the transitions that take place in a choice of words, even in the choice of some of the symbolic language in the Old Testament is because these words were written to be sung. They were actually set to music.

Many of these prophecies are in poetic form and so possibly some of the variance in words, some of the variance of structure, some of the choice of words and symbolism may have to do with poetic structure, and it may have to do with the choice of laying out the words for singing for the vowel sounds as anyone who has sung much will realize that certain vowel sounds go better when you're reaching high notes. And so consequently, some languages even lend themselves to singing more than others such as Italian. But nevertheless, this may be one of the reasons for this shift from 'mountain' to 'nation' even when the words mean the same thing.

Let's continue in Isaiah 2:2 "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. {3} And many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the nation of the LORD, to the ruling family of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {4} And he shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Isaiah and Music

Wow, what a promise. Now this is one of those beautiful scriptures, and it has found its way into who knows how many songs in the last 200 years. Writers have found these words so moving and have placed them to music, choral works or solo works. So many of them have come from Isaiah. It is astonishing but of course, Isaiah was probably written to be set to music in the first place. Consequently, it lends itself so easily to the setting of music.

Prophecy about the Last Days

Now bear in mind that this is a prophecy about the last days. Here is a man who starts out with a song, and in the process of the song, he seems to be talking to Jerusalem of the seventh century BC, warning them of all their sins, their corruptions, their problems and all the bad things that they have gone through and telling them of their future destruction, which would happen, telling

them that they will return to the land and that would happen. But then all of a sudden, he lets us know, NO!, I'm not really talking about that, I'm really talking about the last days and he then goes on to tell us that this is a prophecy of the time when God will rebuke strong nations afar off. They will disarm, they will turn their implements of war into the implements of agriculture, and their war colleges will be disbanded, and nobody will learn war any more.

This is a time to be anticipated and to look forward to. It's important for us to realize that when we go back and study these prophets, and we see the historical context, we must not forget, the prophet himself saw a latter-day fulfillment, even though he himself had no concept of how far off that day was. In a sense, for him it didn't make much difference how far it was. If something is going to take place after you die, it really is not going to make any difference to you whether it takes place in one year after you die or 1000 years after you die.

So, for Isaiah it is a future event, and it almost seems to be an event that he could reach out and touch, and yet with Isaiah, there seems to be a realization on his part, that these things are somewhere far off, further off than he himself would ever be able to see or experience.

Isaiah 2:6 "Therefore you have forsaken your people the house of Jacob, because they are replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they abound with the children of strangers."

Essentially what he is saying is that they have gotten so involved in international commerce and that they have actually become involved with the religion of these other Eastern religions. They have become soothsayers, fortunetellers, necromancers involved with pagan ideas and demonism.

He says in verse seven "Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots."

We could look at that and say, well that's a situation like we have in the United States today. Have you ever been on the freeway at rush hour, and there's not any end of their chariots, but you need to understand that 'horses' and 'chariots', are implements of war in the Bible, they are not things that the normal man on the street uses in his daily life? This is a definite reference to the defense establishment of Israel in the seventh century B.C. For horses were not used in agriculture at this time. Oxen were used in agriculture for plowing.

Horses were used for war. They would put leather type armor on their horses. You can imagine the situation that you would be in with a squad of foot soldiers and a couple of fellas would come roaring at you, riding horses or in chariots. Horses and horse drawn chariots were the tanks, the fast-armored cavalry of the seventh century B.C.

Horses were of no value except for war. So consequently, when you see references to horses throughout prophecy, you have to understand that, it's like saying tanks or armored cavalry when you read it because that is the equivalent for that day and time.

Prosperity

What he's talking about is a time when the land was absolutely in a time of unparalleled prosperity. When their defense establishment was an absolute powerhouse. When there wasn't any end, or shortage anywhere of horses and implements of war, of chariots and soldiers and cavalry. So even at a time of prosperity, when you had spent all the money you could find, and you've really put together a defense establishment, when you feel you've made yourself secure from your enemies from all over but at that point in time, as far as God is concerned, you are at your absolute weakest.

Isaiah 2:8 "Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: {9} And the mean man bows down, and the great man humbles himself: therefore, forgive them not. {10} Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. {11} The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. {12} For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:"

Day of the Lord

Now all the students of prophecy know suddenly where we are. The expression "day of the LORD of hosts" in verse 12 is absolutely a unique time in the history of man. The references to 'the day of the Lord' throughout the Old and New Testament helps us to realize that this is talking about a specific time in the history of man. There's never been a time before it nor will there be a time after it. It is one time, unique in all the history of man and it is yet, ahead of us today. It is to take place at the very end.

And so again, where has Isaiah taken us. Even though he is using seventh century BC Israel, Judah and Jerusalem as his model, he has taken us to the 'end time' and 'the day the Lord' in the sociological structure of that time and what it will be like, the relationship of man to God at that time, and the results that will take place. The result is catastrophic. In its initial point it is utopia in his conclusion, because God will return and will establish His kingdom and will rule the earth and will bring about peace. It is a beautiful thing to understand but it's pretty scary in its implementation.

The Sixth Seal

Isaiah 2:13 He says: "Upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, {14} And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, {15} And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, {16} And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. {17} And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. {18} And the idols he shall utterly abolish. {19} And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth."

Where are we in prophecy? Revelation 6:15, the sixth seal is precisely where we are. The wording is almost identical. Here is a connecting point, a little place we can stitch together and

stretch it out, so you can see what you have gotten. You could run a needle and thread right through here and right through Revelation 6:15 and bring it back out and you have tacked it together.

So, it is easy to understand then where Isaiah is. What confuses people is that they don't understand that they are looking at 7th. century BC Jerusalem. You are looking at a little model of a people at a certain time which Isaiah prophesied to, who are not going to hear and were not going to listen, then why preach? Why teach? Well, because the message was to another people, at another time, and another place. Isaiah knew that, in part. I doubt if he understood it in full.

But whatever time we have to go through some of his writings we will find little references, to show that he understood the concept of typology, of one thing being a model of something that's going to happen at another time in history. He understood it very clearly. Just how far he understood we can only speculate.

God Shall Shake the Earth

Isaiah 2:20 God says "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; {21} To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake terribly the earth."

God arises to shake terribly the earth. This is very poetic, and of course probably in its original form in music it had the same tune as a little chorus that began to follow as a result of what happened before, to increase the emphasis on what he was saying. Also, sometimes you get the feeling that things are mentioned twice in parallel, like this in the Bible, because they're going to happen twice. It is an interesting concept of itself and one that deserves a lot of study.

God Will Take Away the Mighty Man

Now Isaiah 2:22 is rather interesting in that it begins the following chapter. These chapter breaks were put in here with a great deal of thought, but nobody is perfect, and they do miss in some cases where the changeover takes place. Here it takes place with a very important concept, which is developed in the third chapter that begins in verse 22 of chapter 2.

Isaiah 2:22 "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Isaiah 3:1 "For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, does take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water."

That's not all that He is going to take away. He is going to take away {2} "The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, {3} The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. {4} And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them."

Now, what is this all this about? Verse 2 says, "Stop depending on man, whose breath is in his nostrils, because what I am going to do is, I'm going to take away your leadership. Your mighty man is going to be gone. The man-of-war, he's not going to be there, not the one that you can really depend on. Those men are all gone now. The judge that was honest is going to be gone. The Prophet and the prudent, the man who had wisdom that you could depend on who consulted with the Oracle of God, he will not be there. God is going to take him away. The captain of fifty, the honorable man, the counselor, the cunning artificer, the eloquent orator, the great speaker. They're all gone. You depend upon these people, you lean on them and when I jerk him away, where are you going to be? You're going to collapse in the dust. God says, "Don't cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Now one of the sobering things about this, I believe, is this passage in chapter 3 that caused my friend to come to me and made the statement that he did when he said "Boy, that sounds like it was written for us today", because even then, which was quite a while ago, there was a profound awareness on anybody watching world events, of a gradual weakening of the leadership of our country. It did seem that many of those men that could be dependent upon to lead our nation in the battle were beginning to disappear and that the resolve, the absolute iron jaw resolve that is necessary if you're going to go into battle in front of a group of men, wasn't there. The willingness to win a war was not there, We had gotten to the place where we seemed to be afraid to win.

God Did Not Send False Prophets

I've often thought about what Jeremiah said when he talked about false prophets. He talked about prophets that were really anti-God, but He also talked about prophets that went out preaching God's word that God never sent. They say, "The Lord says", and God says, "I never sent these people."

God makes an interesting statement through Jeremiah, He says, "If these people that I didn't send, if they had caused my people to hear my words, they would've turned them away from the evil of their doings" (Jeremiah 23:22).

You do know that in the earliest years of our country and in the early years in Great Britain that there were preachers who stood before the pulpit and thundered out the Word of God and said it was infallible and people were afraid of God's Word.

We have somehow changed among our people to where there is no fear of God before our eyes anymore. Instead of fearing God, we fear our enemies.

Children Shall Rule Over Them

"I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them" (Isaiah 3:4).

He didn't mean little children, he is speaking figuratively, that children are going to rule over you.

Isaiah 3:5 "The people shall be oppressed, everyone by another, and everyone by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable. {6} When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, You have clothing, you be our ruler, and let this ruin be under your hand: {7} In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: don't make me a ruler of the people."

Sin of Sodom

Today, the sin of Sodom is declared in the streets and declared before everybody. They make a big issue out of it and they don't hide it.

"Woe to their soul, for they have rewarded evil unto themselves."

Isaiah 3:10 "Say you to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. {11} Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. {12} As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths. {13} The LORD stands up to plead and stands to judge the people. {14} The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for you have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. {15} What do you mean that you beat my people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord GOD of hosts. {16} Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: {17} Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. {18} In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, {19} The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, {20} The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, {21} The rings, and nose jewels, {22} The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, {23} The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. 24} And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well-set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. {25} Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war."

This is quite a list. All kinds of preachers down through the years have preached against women wearing all kinds of jewelry and makeup, and they find things in the scriptures here about it. All of this is abject nonsense, total nonsense. For none of these things that are mentioned here are wrong. It is the fact that the women of Zion had come to the place of such total arrogance, such self-sufficiency, and they totally neglected God, that He was going to totally humiliate them.

All this became a point of total self-centered ego on the part of these women. And God said, "I am going to take your ego truly away from you, and totally humiliate you because of what you have done." So, it has nothing to do with decoration of the body or the wearing of makeup or anything of the sort. The question of wanton eyes, for those of you who know what that is all

about, has been answered in the 'Christian Woman' booklet that I wrote, and I will refer you there.

And so, on it goes. There's so much more to be said, and it's a similar developed theme. In chapter 4, he speaks of the remnant returning to Israel, and how they're going to have a chance to be back in their land again, and this would not be the end of a punishment that they would have.

In chapter 5, comes this song of God's vineyard, a song for his well-beloved. He talks in chapter 5, about a time of going into captivity, a time of just cramming people up into the land making it so a person doesn't have a place to be alone in the land.

Isaiah 5:20 "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! {21} Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! {22} Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink."

What he is talking about where he says they call evil good and good evil are the people who turn the Law of God upside down, and they take things that God calls evil and they decide it's not evil, it is good. They take things that God calls good, and they turn it around and say that it is evil. Strangely, it has been religious people, ministers and preachers are the ones who would go through the Bible and if it was up to them, they would blue pencil out half of the Psalms.

He says in verse 24 "Therefore as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

This is a fascinating prophecy and I recommend that you read it all. I would recommend the Living Bible to you, it is a good paraphrase translation for studying through some of these sections of prophecy.

This segment of Isaiah, chapters one through five, is a prologue. But interestingly enough, it locks itself very firmly into an 'end time' prophetic context. The next segment of Isaiah begins in chapter 7 verse one and it goes on for about five chapters and it in itself is probably one of the most fascinating studies of duality of prophecy that you'll ever see anywhere in the Bible. But that'll have to wait till the next article.

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with Mr. Dart's reasons as to why Christianity always looks to Europe for the end time prophecies? Why or why not?
2. What are your thoughts about the point that one reason prophecies can fail is that they are conditional?
3. Have you ever thoroughly studied the book of Isaiah?
4. Were there any points that Mr. Dart made that you had never heard of?
5. If there were, what were they?
6. What are your thoughts to Mr. Dart's point that our society could be headed down to being just as corrupt as Israel and Judah?
7. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's point that we can do things and be part of the 'Church', and yet Christ may say that He doesn't know us?
8. Do you agree that you have to have true substance and form in your religion?
9. Do you agree that the message that Isaiah was meant for another time and another group of people?
10. Do you see any warnings that we may need to heed to today?