

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah lived in similar times to our own – **Post-Xn!** Post-Covenant faith! There was the **nominal** Covenant structures and institutions of religion still in place but not the **commitment** to the Lord nor the **faith/love** in and to the Lord. The religion was ‘on the surface’ – for most – but there were the faithful minority who truly loved the Lord. Chapter one makes clear there was **formal** religion, all the sacrifices were still being offered but God was **not happy** with their **formality**. It was **not** bearing fruit – the **judiciary** loved **bribes**; they did not defend the cause of the **fatherless**, and the **widow’s** case just did not matter to them! They did not have the care of **people!**

A time comes when God in His mercy sends a **real prophet** to His covenanted people to **save** them from impending judgment and to bring them back to their **senses** – and roots! God being a Sovereign is **not obligated** to warn them or send them a reminder – but He really does **not** want His people to **suffer!** He **loves** them! And God is still like that – He does not want His people to suffer! He **raises up**, and **moves**, His servants to **remind** an individual or nation where they are heading! Jude: *“I want to **remind** you, **although** you once fully **knew** it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe”*[Jude 5]!

So, if Israel **continued** in their present course they were doomed. The signs were there for all to see – if their eyes were open – which they weren’t! But that is the very **nature** of judgement – you don’t see the obvious – yet **others** see it as an **accident** waiting to **happen!**

The **main** corruption was **Syncretism of the True Religion**. The **merging** of religions. First there was Solomon *“Then Solomon built a high place **for Chemosh** the abomination of Moab, **and for Molech** the abomination of the Ammonites”*[1K11:7]. **Amazing!** Then King Jeroboam made Two Golden Calves one in Bethel and one in Dan *“Behold **your gods**, O Israel, **who brought you up out of***

the land of Egypt”[1K12:28] Then Omri who “*did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him*”[1Kin 16:30]

Of course none of these Kings would have done it **obviously** or **suddenly** - else there would have been an uprising! It was a **gradual** thing, **accommodating** the current popular **culture**. They would say ‘We are not worshipping these calves, they are there just to **help** us’. There would be **plausible** arguments for it! They would have said ‘they’re just **icons** to **help** us believe’. **APP** And of course that is what we have today – ‘Does it really matter whether we believe in God or Allah or Buddha - they are **all leading to the same god**’! We must not be **arrogant** and say we have it all right. But God said to Israel ‘You shall **not** bow down to any **other** God’ The **Shema!** “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*”[Deu 6:4]

The PARTICULAR SINS which GRIEVED GOD

First, **An Accumulation of Material Possessions to the Disadvantage of Others!** Nothing wrong with accumulating wealth or anything if it is for the glory of God and the good of society! Abram was very rich! So was King David and Solomon! To God’s glory! “*Woe to those who **join** house to house, who **add** field to field, until there is **no more room**, and you are made to dwell **alone***” [8]! **Ousting others out** so that you can **expand** your **profits!** **APP** RBS, making **millions** while **sacking thousands!** Giving no consideration to **others** (staff) involved in a deal! **APP** At Election time, **beware** of a Party that puts the **economy** at the centre of their policies and **leaves out** the **human essentials** and needs of **people** especially the **poor!** God **will** bring judgment “*ten acres of vineyard shall yield but **one** bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah*”(tenth of a homer)! [10] The **most important** aspect of life is **not the economy!** It is the **moral and spiritual!** Some time ago I read that our government have said ‘Christianity is not **part** of the culture of British people’! Talk of **syncretism** – we are not even part of the mixed grill! Materialism cannot **guarantee** happiness. **Money, sex and power** will not give you what you think they will. Beware of the accumulation of material possession to the disadvantage of others!

(2) Inordinate Affection for Strong Drink and the Delusion of Pleasure! They “*run after strong drink...tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them*”[11] The UK now has a **binge drinking** culture...right thru the night. We constantly read in the press about **alcohol related illnesses/abuse**. Strong drink is still the **No 1 police problem** in the land. Drugs is catching up but drink is still No 1.

“*lyre and harp, tambourine and flute*”?[12] Many youngsters walking the streets have earphones listening to music! CDs, mp3s, iPods everywhere, dentist, bank, doctors? What’s wrong with that! Absolutely **nothing!** Music is **God’s invention!** So why does Isaiah **condemn music?** Probably because, like today, the **type** of music made a bad impression on the **mind**. Music **can** transport us to an unrealistic world of utopia! Music can ‘whisk us away’ and **cloud out reality!** The last thing people seem to want to day is just to **think** - especially about reality! It is when we have an **inordinate** love for them and **give** them and allow them a place they were never meant to have, that is condemned! How do we know when that happens? When we are **not able** to **discern** God’s hand in providence! When we “*do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of His hands*”[12b]! Ie, when it **prevents** us from serving God or when we **choose** it **before** some spiritual duty!

(3) Complete Reversal of Morals “*call evil good, and good evil... darkness for light, and light for darkness*” [20]! We have that today. **Abortion** is not killing, its **women’s right of choice!** **Euthanasia** is not killing, it is showing **mercy** and **dying** with **dignity!** Its not vandalism, its **anti-social behaviour!** Its not disobedience in school but **inappropriate disorders!** Nice names for bad things! **APP** The Church needs to speak up much louder!

(4) Humanistic Philosophy “*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and shrewd in their own sight*”![21] ‘Bible was okay for the ancients, but now there has been the **Enlightenment**. Bible is helpful but not God’s Word! A **trust/confidence** in **public opinion** and in **humanity**. ‘The whole world can’t be wrong?’ It was in Noah’s day!

(5) Injustice in the Courts “*who acquit the **guilty** for a **bribe**, and deprive the **innocent** of his right*”[23] Our prisons have many **innocent victims!** Some have been set free - how many more should be set free? Some **without** any **compensation** for years of unjustified imprisonment. Conversely, many guilty people walk our streets! Amazing! The law is on the side of the criminal – not the victim!

ISAIAH’S SOLUTION?

He thought hard! He came up with an answer! He **had to communicate God’s Word clearly!** So...he **sang a song!** Actually he sang **two songs!** Being a music culture, he knew a Song might get the message home! Song (1) A song that **really portrayed** Israel in their **true colours!** As they really were! “*Let me sing for my beloved*”![1] In the song he is representing God who had a very special vineyard, which he **cared** for, Israel - a highly **privileged** nation! It was in a “*fertile hill*”, he “*dug it and cleared it of stones*”. He even “*built a **watchtower** in the midst of it*”! He **expected** it “*to yield grapes*”! But he was greatly **disappointed!** “*it yielded only **wild grapes***”! God was so upset! Just as businessmen are disappointed with a **poor return** on their **investment** – so God is upset with the ‘**poor returns**’ He is getting from all He has invested in Israel - and in our nation **over the years!** But here’s the beautiful:

Song (2) Isaiah’s 1st message was a **long** message from God for Israel/Judah. The 1st message, began with the Song in chapter 5. It lasted until chapter 39! Very long, full of details for **other nations** as well as Israel. **All judgment!** But there was a **caveat!** The judgment was for the **unrepentant**. If you repented, things would be different! Isaiah’s 2nd Song was one of **blessing!** It begins with chapter 40!

“***Comfort, comfort My people***”! It was full of **assurance** to those who repented at His “***turn ye***” “***though your sins be as scarlet...***”: (1) Your “***warfare is ended***”, (2) Your “***iniquity is pardoned***”, (3) “***Behold your God...He will **gather the lambs** in His arms; He will **carry them** in His bosom, and **gently lead** those that are with young...He does **not grow faint** or weary***” “***Fear not...I am the One who **helps you...your Redeemer*****”[41:14] The **Gospel** of Isaiah!