

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are two teachers and every day during the past week we had a quiet time from 7 selected chapters from ISAIAH in the Old Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned from our quiet times. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM ISAIAH.

(S) **SHARING FROM SELECTED CHAPTERS FROM ISAIAH**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Isaiah chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. Now we will use our notes to share important truths and lessons from some of these chapters and discuss some difficult passages.

Sharing quiet times from Isaiah chapter 1.

Outward religious ceremonies are meaningless. Inward renewal is indispensable. The prophet Isaiah lived from 740-680 B.C. During his time, the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh ruled. Except for king Hezekiah, they were all evil kings. Under king Uzziah, the southern kingdom of Judah was experiencing economic welfare and political peace, but sadly also religious decline. People were *outwardly* still going to the temple, offering sacrifices in the temple, burning incense to the Lord and attending the great festivals of Israel. Outwardly, everything looked as if it could not be better with that country! Outwardly, there was political stability, economic growth and religious performance. But the living God does not only look at the outward life of people. He looks at the heart. He looks inside people and tests their thoughts, motives and attitudes. He looks into the secret and hidden corners of people and sees exactly what they are doing. There is nothing that the living God does not see or know!

First. God describes Israel's sin. God contrasts Israel with animals. While an ox or a donkey knows its own master and stable, Israel does not know God. To *know* God does not mean *to know God intellectually* as having knowledge about what the Bible says about God. It means *to know God spiritually* as personally responding to God by faith and love and obedience. Israel had intellectual knowledge of God, but it did not have spiritual knowledge of God. In spite of its intellectual knowledge of God, Israel turned its back on God and lived a life that disobeyed and dishonoured God. The Israelites gave themselves to do evil and to be corrupt. They did not seek justice for the innocent. They did not encourage the oppressed. They did not defend the cause of the fatherless. And they did not plead the cause of the widow.

Second. God describes the consequences of Israel's sin. Israel's sin will have serious personal consequences. The people of Israel will become sick, physically and spiritually sick from the sole of their feet to the top of their head. Israel's sin will have serious *political and economic consequences*. The land will suffer and its cities will suffer. Foreigners will come in to raid their crops and foreign armies will come to attack their cities. According to Isaiah 1:9, the prophet Isaiah prophesies that, unless the Almighty God graciously leaves Israel some survivors, the nation of Israel will be completely destroyed just like Sodom and Gomorra. God is going to punish the nation of Israel with destruction so that only a *remnant* will survive. According to Isaiah 8:18, this remnant will consist of people like the prophet Isaiah and his disciples. Israel's sin will also have serious *religious consequences*. Although the Israelites continue to go to the temple, offer sacrifices, burn incense and attend the great religious festivals, all these outward religious ceremonies are *meaningless* to God! Outward religious practices are *detestable* to God! God will not even listen to the prayers of the Israelites.

Third. God calls Israel to repent of its sin. The only way out of sin and all its consequences is to repent. To repent means *to stop doing what is wrong in God's eyes*. To repent means *to wash clean*. This is a symbol for confessing sins and asking for God's forgiveness. To repent means *to do what is right in God's eyes*. The truth about right and wrong is found in the Bible. The truth must also be practised.

Fourth. Only God can make people completely clean. Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now, let us reason together: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." The red colour reminded the Israelites of all the bloodshed in Israel. Only people who repent will be forgiven. *Only the living God can cleanse you and me in such a perfect way that nothing of our past sin remains!*

(T) **Sharing quiet times from Isaiah chapter 2 and 3.**

God's judgement results in oppression and poverty. Isaiah 1 described the sin of Israel. Isaiah chapters 2 and 3 describe the judgement of God. In the New Testament in Romans 1:24-28, God warns that he will give godless and wicked people over to an immoral and shameful life. Likewise, in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 2-3, God warns Israel that he will give godless and wicked people over to children and women that will oppress them, give them over to poverty, give them over to the arrogance of man and finally give them over to terror.

First. God will give Israel over to children and women who will oppress them. In Isaiah 3, God says that in the coming invasions of Nebuchadnezzar, the wars and exile of the people, he is going to take away from Israel their supplies and their support (3:1). The elders and leaders of Israel neglected to rule Israel as God's representatives. Instead they destroyed God's people (3:14). Therefore, God is going to take away their military officers and heroes, who were supposed to defend Israel from enemies. He is going to take away their judges, who were supposed to maintain law and order in the country. He is going to take away the prophets, who were supposed to teach the people what is right and wrong in God's eyes. He is going to take away the counsellors, who were supposed to guide people through their problems. And he is going to take away the skilled craftsmen, who make things people need to live. When God judges Israel, he is going to take away their elders, so that *Israel will become a nation without leaders!* Then children and women are going to oppress the nation. According to God's ordinances in creation, children and women are not called to have authority over men. But the young people will rise up against the old people and the base people will rise up against the honourable people (3:4-5). And the youths and the women ruling over the nation of Israel will lead the nation astray.

Second. God will give Israel over to poverty. Because the women of Israel were haughty, proud and spent their time flirting and made a show of their clothes and ornaments in order to draw attention on themselves (3:16), God is going to take it all away from them. Instead of fragrance there will be a stench hanging around the women. Instead of beautiful clothes, the women will wear sackcloth and a rope to hold it together. Instead of beautiful long hair, the women will be shaved bald (3:24). And because the men of Israel went out to fight in wars, God is going to let them fall by the sword in their battles (3:25). Both the land of Israel and the people of Israel will become poor.

Third. God will give Israel over to the arrogance of man. Because Israel became full of the superstitions from the East and involved themselves in idolatry, occultism, spiritism and the reading of the stars, people became arrogant against God and God's Word. Arrogant people, who taught Israel idolatry, occultism, witchcraft and false teachings, led Israel astray, so that Israel turned its back on the living God. The arrogance of people is very well described in Isaiah chapter 5. Some arrogant people became greedy and materialistic and added house to house and joined field to field, until there was no more space for the poor and destitute to live (5:8). Some arrogant people stayed up late at night to party and to drink themselves drunk, so that they no longer could give any regard to God or his work (5:11-12). Some arrogant people promoted sin and wickedness in the land. They brought every kind of sin into their society so that Israel became completely degenerated (5:18). Some arrogant people deliberately changed God's holy laws and called evil things "good" and good things "evil". They deliberately exchanged truth for lies and light for darkness. They corrupted the education of children and the morals of society, so that the godless and wicked ruled in the land and the righteous people were continually persecuted (5:20). Some arrogant people became wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight. They set themselves up as the standard of truth and conduct. They made themselves into the gods of the people (5:21). And finally, some arrogant people became completely corrupt in their business dealings, while other arrogant people became completely corrupt in the legal system of the country. They acquitted the guilty for a bribe, but denied justice to the innocent (5:23).

Fourth, Finally, on the Judgement Day, God will give Israel over to terror. Isaiah 2:17 says, "The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted alone in that day". In Isaiah 2:19, the prophet Isaiah warns that on the Final Judgement Day, people will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground because they will be terrified when they see the splendour of God's majesty when he comes to shake the whole earth. Many years later, the apostle John prophesied the same thing in Revelation 6:15-17, This proves that *what the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied in terms of the nation Israel is according to the apostles of the New Testament going to happen to all the nations in the whole world. The prophet Isaiah directed his prophecy to Israel, but the apostle John directed his prophecy to all the nations in the world. The Old Testament is preparatory, while the New Testament is fulfilment! Therefore, the prophecies in the Old Testament may not be interpreted apart from the New Testament, because all Old Testament prophecies find their interpretation and ultimate fulfilment in the New Testament.*

(S) **Sharing quiet times from Isaiah chapter 2 and 4.**

God's renewal of everything is prophesied both in the Old and New Testament. Isaiah chapter 2-4 is a short section concerning God's judgement of Israel and God's renewal of Israel. All God's dealings with Israel culminate throughout the Old Testament "in the last days". Isaiah chapter 2 begins with a prophecy that promises the coming of a glorious

future and chapter 4 ends with another prophecy about this same glorious future. The words “in the last days” are a description of the whole Messianic Age as seen in prophetic perspective.

In the last days, Mount Zion would be the most important mountain in the world. All the nations in the world would stream to it and its temple, because God’s law and God’s word would go out from there to the whole world. From there, God would teach the nations his ways, so that people of all the nations would walk in his ways. They would be completely transformed: They would beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks and they would never make war again.

In the last days, the branch of the Lord would be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land would be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. *The survivors* are those who were not destroyed in God’s judgement, those who would inherit the glorious future of Israel. According to Romans, the survivors are *the remnant*, those whom God elected to be his people, whom he sovereignly called, justified and glorified (Rom 9:27-29). Isaiah prophesied that they would be called *holy* (4:3), that is, they would be separated from everything sinful. God himself would judge and cleanse them with *a spirit of judgement and a spirit of fire*. For example, through his Holy Spirit he would convince them of sin, of righteousness and of judgement (Jn 16:8) *The fruit of the land* refers to the material welfare in the land of Canaan, which was initially fulfilled after the return of Israel from exile, but would ultimately be fulfilled in the new heaven and the new earth of which Revelation 21-22 speaks. *The Branch of the Lord* refers to the Coming Messiah (Jer 23:5-6), who would not only bring material blessings, but especially spiritual blessings. This purified Zion would become the place where God would live. Over Zion and over all who assemble there, God would create a cloud by day and a fire by night. Exodus 13:21, teaches us that the cloud by day and the fire by night was a picture symbolising the visible presence of God with Israel especially to guide them and to protect them throughout their journey through the desert (Ps 105:39). After that, according to Leviticus 16:2, the glory of God withdrew behind the curtain in the Most Holy Place in the temple and not even the high priest Aaron was allowed to enter there freely (1 Ki 8:10). The prophet Isaiah sees this same glory of God again in the last days over the new Zion. At that time, God would dwell among his people in the new Zion (Ezek 48:45; Joel 3:21). Although the *cloud* points to the presence of God, it also points to the concealment of God. It is only in the New Testament revelation that the apostles teach us that the invisible God reveals himself visibly in and through Jesus Christ (Jn 14:7; 2 Cor 4:6; Col 1:15).

(T) I want to teach about **the relationship between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the teachings of the New Testament.** The book of Isaiah contains many prophecies concerning the glorious future of Zion. *Zion* is another name for Jerusalem. The *old Zion* was the mountain on which only the old temple and the palace of king David stood. However, the *new Zion*, of which the prophet Isaiah speaks, is a picture of something much bigger than the renewal of Israel. The following two facts characterise all the prophets of the Old Testament period.

First. The Old Testament prophets saw all future events only in prophetic perspective. Isaiah described all the end-time (eschatological) events as happening close to his own time. This is because he could only see things in *prophetic perspective*. *He saw all future events as one whole picture in which the relationship of the distinct parts was in reality different than what they seemed.* It was as if he stood in a lane of trees, in which he could clearly distinguish the trees closest to him, but the further the trees were separated from him, the more they flowed into one another. He could see *that* certain end-time (eschatological) events would happen, but he could not distinguish clearly *when* they would happen. For the prophets of the Old Testament, all these end-time events would happen together “in the last days”.

For example, the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied that the following events would take place “in the last days”: Israel would be judged by going into exile to Babylon; only a remnant would return to Israel; the land of Israel would be restored; the Messiah would come; the Holy Spirit would be poured out; and the final judgement of the godless nations and the renewal of the land of Israel would immediately follow these events.

However, the Bible clearly teaches that these events were in fact separated from one another by centuries! The exile took place *almost 100 years* after Isaiah lived and prophesied. The first coming of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place *more than 500 years after* the return of Israel from the Babylonian exile! And the Final Judgement of the godless people of all nations and the renewal of the whole earth has not yet taken place *two thousand years after* the first coming of the Messiah! God did not reveal to the prophets that there would be great lengths of time between these various end-time events.

Second. The Old Testament prophets did not know the mystery that God’s future plan included the Gentile nations. Ephesians 3:2-6 teaches that the prophets of the Old Testament were not enlightened about the *mystery*, namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles would be heirs together with Israel (Rom 8:16-17), that believing Jews and Gentiles would be members of the same body, which is the Church (Eph 2:15-16), and that believing Jews and Gentiles would be sharers together in God’s promises made to Israel (2 Cor 1:20-22). *The prophets in the Old Testament did not know the mystery or plan of God that the Gentile nations would become heirs of this future glory together with Israel and that on equal footing with Israel* (Eph 2:11-22; 1 Pet 1:10-12)!

Because the Old Testament prophets did not know this mystery or plan of God, Isaiah could only see the future glory of God as happening *in and through Israel*. Isaiah's picture of the future glory of God's kingdom does not break through the boundaries of God's old covenant people. Because he lived before the time of fulfilment, which arrived in the coming of Jesus Christ, he could only describe the glorious future of the new earth after the Second Coming of Christ in terms of the new land of Israel with the new Zion as its centre (4:2; 11:6-9; 24:23; 25:6-8; 33:24; 35:1-10; 40:1-5; 46:13; 51:3-6,11,16; 52:1,7; 59:19-20; 60:1-22; 62: 1-12; 66:8). Likewise in Ezekiel chapter 40-48, the prophet Ezekiel could only describe the new worship of God in the future in terms of what people could understand at that time, that is, in terms of the Old Testament temple and its ceremonies, and not yet in terms of the New Testament worship of God in spirit and in truth (Jn 4: 23-24)! Isaiah and Ezekiel could only picture the future revelation of God's glory in terms of the Old Testament forms, like the people of Israel, the temple of Israel, the sacrifices and priests of Israel, and the land of Israel. God gave the prophets of the Old Testament a revelation of the future glory of all his future people in the world, but *only with words and pictures and within the reference framework, which the Jews in his day would be able to understand*. We cannot expect the prophets of the Old Testament to picture the revelation of God's glory in terms of the future New Testament forms, because that remained a mystery until it was revealed by Christ to the apostles of the New Testament!

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Every day have a quiet time from one chapter from Isaiah. The selected chapters are Isaiah 9, 11, 40, 41, 42, 45 and 46. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share your discoveries, lessons and blessings.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".