

## Q1 L01 - Crisis of Identity - 2021-01-02

Jean Ross: I'd like you to bow your heads as we have a word of prayer.

Dear Father, we are indeed so grateful for the opportunity to just take a break from the busyness of the week and gather in Your presence on this special day that You have blessed.

Now Lord, we know there are folks scattered all over the country that are part of our study time together. And we can't be united in person at the moment, but Lord, we are grateful that we can be united in Your Spirit. And we're all sharing the same faith, we're looking at the same Scriptures to build our faith.

And so, Father, we ask a special blessing upon our time today. Be with those who are listening, and pray that You'd guide them. Be with Pastor Doug as he opens up the Word and we launch into a whole new series of studies on the book of Isaiah. How exciting is this? So, thank You, Lord, for being with us, and we commit this time in Your keeping, in Jesus' name, amen.

Our study on the book of Isaiah begins today, and Pastor Doug will be leading us in our first lesson.

Doug Batchelor: I want to welcome our friends that are studying the Word of God with us today. I'm very excited about the new study that we've got going today because we're dealing with just one of the most magnificent books in the Bible, the book of Isaiah. And as was mentioned, for those who may have tuned in late, we're just beginning a new quarter study.

Now, keep in mind that some of you are watching this stream live. That's because here at the Granite Bay Church, to provide the "Sabbath School" program for the other satellite networks, we record it three weeks in advance so that we can do the editing, and put in the subtitles, and so forth. And but it will play nationally the first week of January, but we're getting to get into it here with our friends who are watching online. And I'm excited about Isaiah because it's just a wonderful book. It's basically like the gospel in the Old Testament.

Now, the lesson for today, lesson one is called "A Crisis of Identity." And we've got a memory verse, and the memory verse is from Isaiah 1, verse 18. And we've got a few families here with our support staff that are helping us with this production. They're welcome to say it with us, Isaiah 1:18. And I bet some of us know this one by heart even before we were told it was our memory verse.

"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

There you've got the gospel all summarized in that verse. The Lord can take our sins, though they're just as red as scarlet, He can make them white as snow. That's a wonderful promise. Now, the study today just so you don't get confused, you might be wondering, how are we going to study 66 chapters of Isaiah in 13 weeks? And the way I think that they're doing it, I haven't read the whole quarterly yet, is they're--they'll be bouncing around and doing some things based on content and sections.

So, our assignment today, we're going to be studying chapter 1 of Isaiah and part of chapter 5. And then I believe in future lessons, they'll back up and they'll get Isaiah 2, 3, 4, and so forth. And so, it'll be covering certain themes. Now, I thought it was appropriate today as we're getting ready to enter this majestic book of Isaiah that we have a little bit of introduction to help understand it. The word "Isaiah," the name, it means salvation is of the Lord. And he is really a gospel prophet in the Old Testament. And it says Isaiah is the son of Amoz. And the word "Amoz" means strong, strength, to be firm. And so, here you've got this person whose name is salvation of the Lord, he is the son of strength. And just even in the names, Bible names means something. And you know, when they were naming their babies in the Bible, they would pray the Holy Spirit would guide them, and that name would somehow be the mission of their life or have some prophetic significance.

And when Jacob went from Jacob, which means deceiver, and he wrestled with God, he was renamed. No longer the deceiver, now he's the prince Israel. And so, they would even change their names sometimes when their

destinies changed. So, Isaiah's named salvation is of the Lord. And the time period of Isaiah when you read your Bibles, Isaiah is both a historical book, it covers Bible history, and it is also a prophetic book. The time of his ministry is about 47 years of public ministry, from about 760 to 713 BC.

Now, the Talmud, which is the Jewish tradition, it tells us that he was ultimately killed by King Manasseh, and he was executed supposedly because Isaiah said that he had visually seen the Lord, and they said that was not possible. You read in chapter 60, it says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." And that's at least the pretense that Manasseh used for executing him. I doubt that was the real reason. But tradition says that he was sawn in two. Now, that's very possible because you read in Hebrews 11:37 that some of those--that's in the great chapter of faith. Some of those who died were sawn asunder. And they believe that is a reference to how Isaiah died. He started as a prophet early, his prophetic ministry covering 47 years, maybe 50 years. But he was a contemporaneous prophet with Jonah. That's right, Jonah was a real prophet in the northern kingdom. Amos, Hosea, but he was a contemporary of Micah, who was the prophet in the southern kingdom. Now, you realize that when Isaiah was involved in ministry, civil war had happened long ago, much earlier between the northern ten tribes and the southern kingdom of Levi, Benjamin, and Judah. And Isaiah's ministry was almost exclusively the southern kingdom, working in and around Jerusalem. The northern kingdom was being plagued by the Assyrians at this time, and they had their cadre of God's prophets up there. Isaiah was a prophet. Unlike Elijah, Isaiah was married. How many of you know the name of his wife? She was a prophetess, the Bible says. I don't think her name's given, but do you know the name of one of Isaiah's sons, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. So, if any of you are expecting, you might pass that on. But so, he was actually married evidently to a prophetess, but I don't know that her name is given. And if I'm wrong, you can correct me on that. Isaiah is a fascinating book because it in many respects, it is one of the oldest books that we have copies of. A complete copy of the scroll of Isaiah was found among the first Dead Sea Scrolls that were found. And it clearly dates to at least 100 years before Christ, possibly 300 BC. Actually, the historians say you're always supposed to say BC first, BC 300. And meaning that the prophecies that you find in Isaiah, such as chapter 53, where he talks very clearly about the Messiah, were written before the event. And so, it is a fascinating book. Not only that, because Isaiah lived about 760 to 713 BC, about 150 years before the king of Persia was born, he specifically mentions the king of Persia by name and has a message for him in his book. That's pretty fascinating.

You know, I remember reading in the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian, that when Alexander the Great, after he finished conquering Tyre, he came down to Jerusalem. And the priests went out of the city, kind of waving the white flag, and they--a procession of priests went to Alexander and they said, "Do not attack us. You are here. Our God said that you would be the king that would destroy the Persians. You're going to succeed." And they showed him, through translators of course, they showed him the books of Daniel that talked about the Greek king that would go forth and conquer. And it says Alexander got on his knees and he worshipped at that point. So, this is not the first time that great conquering kings were foretold before they lived. But yeah, even Cyrus, he could have read about himself written by name. Alexander is not given by name, but Cyrus is mentioned in Isaiah by name in chapter 45. So, in the prophecies of Isaiah, it talks about prophecy--he prophesied the fate of many kingdoms, and they all came true. Babylon, Assyria, the Philistines, Moab, Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, Judah, and Tyre. And so, it's a very thorough book.

Now, there are 66 chapters in Isaiah, but it's not the longest of the prophetic books. Do you know who the longest prophetic book is? It's Jeremiah. Don't--can't always go by chapters. Jeremiah's got 52 chapters, but Jeremiah has 33,000 words. I don't think that's including his book of Lamentations. And Isaiah's only got 25,000. So, sometimes the chapters are longer, or the--yeah, the chapters are longer and there's more words in them. And so, this is just a little background in the book of Isaiah to tell us that--and of course, Isaiah has quite a few prophecies that talk about the coming Messiah. And let me see here, there were some other little facts. Yeah, I think I covered--I covered the main point. Oh, Isaiah is quoted more than 50 times in the New Testament. Jesus frequently refers to the book of Isaiah. So, if there's any question about if Isaiah was really a prophet of God, Jesus said he was.

And so, with that, and I may share a little more as we get into other weeks, let's get into the first section of our study today. And it says, "Hear, oh heavens." Now, we're going to read the first two verses. I'm looking forward to the day when we can move into normal Sabbath School and worship service. You know, there was a time we used to pass around microphones and ask people to help us read the verses. Had it a little more interactive, and I'm hoping that that day will come again soon. But I'll read this for you. Isaiah chapter 1, verse 1 and 2, "The vision of

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz, and Hezekiah kings of Judah."

So, we know that his ministry spanned the reign of several kings. Who is the longest reigning king of Judah? Manasseh. Manasseh comes right after Hezekiah. Who is the second longest reigning king of Judah? Uzziah. So, Isaiah's life is bookend by the two longest reigning kings. Uzziah is when he starts. Manasseh is when he ends. So, that's just a little interesting piece of trivia. He starts out then and he says in verse 2, "Hear, oh heavens. Give ear, oh earth. For the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." Now, he starts his message by saying, "Hear, oh heavens." Is he asking the atmosphere to listen? Is it the gases that he's speaking to? And when he says, "Give ear, oh earth," was Isaiah a pantheist and he's talking to the trees and the rocks? What does that statement mean? Well, you know, if you want to understand something in the Bible, what's the key? Compare Scripture with Scripture. If you look in Deuteronomy 30, verse 19, Moses is speaking here. He said, "I call heaven and earth as a witness today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants might live." I call heaven and earth as a witness. Go to Deuteronomy 31:28, "Gather to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I might speak these words in their hearing, and call heaven and earth to witness against them." So, why did these Bible writers appeal to the heavens and the earth? You know, I think it's interesting, at one point Israel, I think it was the tribe of Manasseh, they built an altar, and Joshua and the other tribes got upset. And they said, "You're only supposed to sacrifice at this one altar." They said, "No, we just created this altar to be a witness." The rocks are a witness? And then when they crossed the Jordan River and the river parted? Joshua said, "Take 12 stones out of the base of the river," before it closed up again, and stacked them up as a witness, really a reminder. And so, when they say, "Hear, oh heavens and earth," now let me give you one more thing to think about. Are there beings in the room today other than human beings? I don't mean pinto beans. I mean, if you read in Ephesians, it says we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against what? Principalities and powers and rulers in heavenly places. So, when you say, "Hear, oh heavens," for the believer in Jehovah, is there a spiritual world? Are they witnessing what's happening here on earth as well? And so, when it says, "Give witness, heavens and earth," it's really calling all the humans, angels, good and bad. The angels above, the angels below. It says we're giving witness of the Word of God. There's a challenge. So, Isaiah is making a declaration for all to hear the beginning of his book. You can also read in Micah 1, verse 2, "Hear, you peoples. All you pay attention, oh earth and all that is in it. Let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple." All right, so he's making an appeal, what he's about to say. So, what does he say now when he says, "Hear, oh heavens"? Look in verse 3. Isaiah 1, verse 3, "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib," or stall we would say. "But Israel does not know. My people do not consider. Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord. They have provoked to anger the holy one of Israel. They've turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again and you revolt more and more?" I'll pause there before I get to the other section here in this passage with verse 6, or with verse 5 rather. He says, "The ox knows his master, the donkey his master's crib, but My people don't know Me." You know, if a horse bucks off his rider, you know where the horse is going to go? Back to the barn where the food is. And if you've got a dog that takes off and runs, they will almost always come home when they get hungry. And if you've got a homing pigeon and you put it in a crate, and you take it from St. Louis to New York and then the crate breaks and it takes off, you know where it's going to go? It's going to fly back to St. Louis. One of the longest pilgrimages, a homing pigeon was being shipped, it was a very expensive homing pigeon from England to some collector in South Africa. And on unloading, that pigeon, it escaped. About six weeks later, it showed up in England. It knew how to find its way home, that's why they're so famous as homing pigeons. So, he's saying even the animals know where their owners are. Says, "But my people forgot that I am your Father, I'm the one who led you out of Egypt. You're going after these other gods. You're forgetting about Me." And then he talks about what's at the heart of it all. This is Isaiah 1, verse 5. "Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot to the head, there is no soundness," that means no healthiness in it. "But wounds and bruises and putrefying," that word "putrefying" means stinking, decaying, corrupting sores. It's not a very pretty picture. "Putrefying sores. They have not been closed or bound up." It's like talking about gangrene. "Or soothed with ointment. Your country is desolate." Before I get into that part, here he describes the condition of sin.

Can you think of somebody in the Bible that was sick from the crown of their head to the sole of their foot? When Job was afflicted. And by the way, keep in mind the afflictions of Job were a type of the sufferings of Christ for our sins. And it says that Job was afflicted with boils, painful boils. And he had to scrape himself, so these are open

sores. It's like what Isaiah is talking about. I know it's not pretty, but this is what the Bible says. From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot.

How does Paul describe sin? It's like a physical sickness. It's a disease or a dis-ease. And this is what Isaiah is saying. And he says, "I want to heal you." Jesus is called the balm in Gilead. Says, "These wounds have not been closed or bound up." By the way, we're going to study later on Isaiah does a little medical work, did you know that? When King Hezekiah is sick, he's got some kind of a fever, and Isaiah has to tell him he's going to die. And there's a sign that comes to him, and it says, you know, the sun actually stops and goes backwards ten degrees. And then God tells Isaiah, "Tell Hezekiah that he will recover and that he is to place a lump of figs on the boil." So, evidently he had some kind of open infection, and Isaiah's the one who gave him the prescription. It's interesting that he didn't just do a healing like Jesus and say, "Be healed," but he used a medicinal remedy. So, they had some rudimentary idea about healing back then, and nothing was being done. He says, "You're sick and you're doing nothing about it." "They've not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment. Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. Strangers devour your land in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers." Now, so when Isaiah is writing, part of the time at least historically when Isaiah is writing, the Assyrians are rampaging through the northern kingdom. In fact, at one point in Isaiah's writing, and this is also mentioned in Chronicles and in Kings, that the king of Assyria came right to the gates of Jerusalem. In order for him to get to the gates of Jerusalem, they had to conquer and burn through all the fortress cities of Judea. And so, with all of this--these enemies at the gates, so to speak, the people are not turning to God. They're spiritually sick, they're threatened by their enemies, they're economically devastated, and he said, "What's with this? You're not turning to Me. You're not praying." It says, "Your cities are burned with fire. Strangers devour your land in your presence, and it's desolate, as overthrown by strangers. So the daughter of Zion," God's people, the church, "is left as a booth in a vineyard." Now, you know, you might--some people, if you're going to live in a house for a long time, you might have a substantial house with stone walls and a tile roof in Bible times. But the farmers sometimes, when they were working and watching their crops, they would have these little booths made out of leaves that would be out there in the farm or the garden. You know, they were living scarecrows back then, and they had these little booths out there. And he says, "Your cities, they're beginning to look like a hut in a garden of cucumbers." Pretty pathetic, "Like a booth in a vineyard or a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah." Now, of course, Sodom and Gomorrah were obliterated, they were annihilated, no survivors. And God said, "Look, I'm giving you a remnant. The ten tribes in the north are going to be carried off by Assyria. Your country has been invaded by the land because of your sins, you've turned to other gods." In Isaiah, he goes into the specifics of what those sins are many times in his books. But the southern kingdom was still going through the sacrificial system. They were still going through the rituals, and we'll get to that in just a minute. So he said, "If it wasn't for the mercy of the Lord, you wouldn't even have a remnant. I'm sparing a remnant."

Next section, rotten ritualism. And Jesus spoke about this, and I'll be reading Isaiah 1:10-14. "Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom." Notice how he starts that next verse. "Give ear to the law of your God, you people of Gomorrah. 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?' says the Lord." They still had the temple, they still had the services, they still went through the rituals. They went through the sham of going through all the sacraments and--but he said, "What good is it if your life is wicked?" And if you're going to talk about people who are really wicked, there's only a couple places you can point that are the epitome of wickedness, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the people in the days of Noah. By the way, Jesus said that's what the world will be like before he returns. And this is what Israel had become like before the Babylonian captivity. "'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices' says the Lord. 'I've had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or lambs, or of goats.'" Can the blood of goats and lambs and those animal sacrifices, do they wash away sin? No, they all pointed to the only one who can wash away sin, and that's Jesus. And so, if we're living high handed, sinful lives, but we say, "Well, well, you know, we're giving a big offering," does that cover our sin? God is saying, "What good is that if you're living wickedly and you're going through all the pretense of religious, you know, ceremony?" Says, "When you come to appear before Me, who has required this of you from your hand, to trample my courts, to bring no more futile sacrifices? Incense is an abomination to Me. The new moons, and the Sabbaths, the calling of your--" Now, does that mean he did away with the Sabbath? No, just meant you're not honoring Me when you come to worship me on Sabbath, and you live like the devil the rest of the week. "The new moons, and the Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies. I cannot endure iniquity and the

sacred meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates. They're trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them." Now, that's pretty strong language. It's like when Jesus said to the religious leaders, "You rob widow's houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers." So, can you be excused from robbing widows if you just pray a long time? No. Amos 5, verse 21, he says, "I hate, I despise your feasts. I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer to Me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. And the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them." What is the condition to having the Lord accept our sacrifices? Repentance, humbling of our hearts, sincerity. If we sincerely repent of our sins and come, He accepts our worship, He accepts our sacrifices. But if we're living in open rebellion and we're going through just the, you know, the sham of religious ritual, that doesn't please the Lord. It's like you remember the parable that Jesus tells, two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a publican, one was a Pharisee. Pharisees were very religious. And the Pharisee stood and he prayed thus with himself, "Lord, I thank You I'm not like other men. I pay tithe of all that I have, and I fast, and I'm not like this publican back here." He's just trusting in his own self-righteousness. But the publican would not so much as lift up his head unto heaven, but he smote upon his breast, he's standing in the back, he says, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." He's repenting. This is what the Lord wants. The Bible says a contrite heart God will not despise. He wants us to have broken hearts, repentance for our sins. Amos 5:24 explains what he's looking for, "But let justice run down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." And moving onto Isaiah chapter 1, verse 15, "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you." Now, that's a scary thought that we might pray, talking about when you spread out your hands and you pray. "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves," here's that verse that we were memorizing. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your doings before My eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good. Seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." Then he says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they'll be as white as snow."

So, what does the Lord want from us? Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean through the blood of the Lamb, turning to Jesus, repentance. "Put away the evil of your doings before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good." Now, that's a very important verse, learn to do good, you know why? If you decide you want to turn to the Lord and you repent, if you can't change everything in one day, don't get discouraged. There is a learning process. When I first came to the Lord, it took awhile for me to learn how to talk without cursing. It was a learning process. But through the Holy Spirit, God was able to put the brakes on. And so, you know, if you've spent your whole life doing evil and you decide, "All right, I repent of my sins, you may need to take some time to learn to do good, right? That make sense? "Rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in the heart--in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." That's why he said in Isaiah 1:15, "If you spread out your hands, I'll hide My eyes." So, if we're living in deliberate sin, and we're giving God our Christmas shopping list and say, "Lord, do this and this and this," God says, "Look, I want your heart. I want you to be surrendered. I want you to be turning from your sins and following Jesus." And then we're really saying, "Lord, I want to be on your team." Matthew 23:14. I already read that, actually, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. You devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation." And even in Isaiah 58, he uses the same principle. He says, "What good is your fasting if you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fists of wickedness? You'll not fast as you do this day to make--will you not fast as you do this day to make your voice heard on high?" Jesus in his ministry said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees," Matthew 23:23. "You pay tithe," and paying tithe is good, but he says, "You pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and you've neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the other undone." Don't neglect paying tithe, and even in the small things, but he said we cannot cloak our unrighteousness by, you know, giving an extra offering. And you know, we've all seen it, not just me, in the church. You've got some people that major in minors. They're extremely religious and exacting in certain areas. You know, I'm a vegan. And that's--you know, not trying to make you feel bad if you're not, just saying that I believe in healthful living. But I've met some people that are vegans, they're vegetarians, they're very fastidious about the way they eat, and they are as mean as snakes. So, you're not saved by veganism, are you? You know what I'm talking about? And so, what God wants is righteousness in us. It's not just a few legalistic, outward forms of worship. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. You cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they're full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup." So, what does Jesus want cleansed first? You want the outside to be clean, you really have got to clean the inside. All right, and next section we're going to is the argument of forgiveness. And this is Isaiah chapter 1, verse 18. "'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they'll be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they will be as wool.'" So, here you've got this incredible contrast. And you

know, whenever I read this verse, a couple of stories come into mind. One is when I lived in New York City growing up, New York City is better now as far as it's--they're having a hard time under the current times, but they are better than back when I was a kid. You know, now when people walk their dogs, they kind of clean up after the dogs? They didn't do that in New York City, and they had a lot of dogs. And that just to give you one example. And the buses did not have catalytic converters. There was a lot of smog in the city. And you know, in our buildings in New York City, we did not take the trash out. We went to the landing and there was an incinerator. We threw our garbage into a big burner that was in the basement. You can--from the 15th floor, you could throw your garbage in this chute, and you could hear it go pop, pop, pop, pop, pop as it fell down, poosh into the incinerator. You can open up the door and you can feel the heat coming up from the incinerator. On top of all the apartment buildings in New York, they had incinerators. And there was ashes in the city on the street, it was a dirty city back in the '60s when I was living there. I woke up one morning and I thought, "Something weird going on." I couldn't hear anything. Usually outside my window in New York City, you always heard the buses stopping and starting, and the taxis honking, and the people yelling, and just always noise. It was dead quiet. I thought, "What happened?" I went to the window, I looked out, about a foot of snow had fallen during the night. And it paralyzed all the traffic. It may have been more than a foot of snow, but there was no vehicles were moving, there were no snow plows out yet. And it made everything so quiet, it insulates noise. And everything suddenly went from dirty to pure. And it was the most amazing transformation, I'll never forget that. But then I had another experience when I read this verse. I was in Maine, I was going to school in Maine, and it was wintertime. And they were driving on the snow in Maine, they knew how to do that. And I was going down the road in a truck with one of the teachers. And we were on some school errand to go to the store. And we were driving by this farm, and this beautiful gray and white dog ran out as dogs sometimes do to bark at trucks that go by. And it slid on the ice, and it slid under the truck. It normally probably would've been fine. And we hit it. But we didn't kill it right away. And we felt terrible. We hit it, and it went and tumbled out from underneath the truck. And we pulled over and went out, and the dog was on the snow, and it was looking up to us, and it was badly wounded, and it was bleeding. And the red blood on the white snow, I'll never forget that picture. And we watched it, it died there in front of us. And I just think about the contrast of the steaming red blood on the white snow, and how different it was. Whenever I think about Jesus and it says scarlet, "Though your sins be as scarlet," the white as snow. I think because of the scarlet blood of Jesus, our sins are made white as snow. And the contrast can't be any greater between those two. So, this is what he does for us. And he says it will be like wool. And of course, they would--they knew how to dye even white wool to make it very white back then. And so, God is saying doesn't matter what your sins are, though they are like scarlet. It's interesting that Isaiah wrote this and then one of the most wicked kings in the world, Manasseh, whose sins were very much like scarlet, he repented and God forgave him. And then when he says, "Come now, let us reason together," what does that mean? Let's argue this out. It's like Jesus said, "What profit is there?" He wants us to take into account and think, use our noodle as they used to say. "Think about it. I'm willing to forgive you." In Revelation 3:18, "I counsel you to buy of Me gold in the fire that you might be rich, and white garments that you might be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." And so, this white represents the purity of Christ's righteousness. And then Isaiah 44, a similar teaching, he says, "I have blotted out like a thick cloud your transgressions." And you think not a cloud of--you can always tell when you see a fire on the horizon. If the smoke is white, it's usually a grass fire. If the smoke is black, it could be a car or a house because there's toxins and things in there that produce black smoke. And so, when it's talking about your sins are like a cloud, it's talking about a black cloud of sin. Says God can make us pure. Says, "Like a cloud, your sins return to me, for I have redeemed you." All right, and then we're going onto the section to eat or be eaten. This is Isaiah 1, verse 19. "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land." So, when we come to the Lord, what does He want from us? A willingness. Now, some of you might say, "You know, I'm not sure I'm prepared to make a Christian commitment. I've got so many changes I need to make. I don't know if I'm even willing." You know what you can do? You can pray that God will make you willing to be willing. I mean, everybody, you can be willing to be made willing. So, really everybody's without excuse. Say, "Lord, I--make me willing to do Your will." Says, "You will eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel," sin is really rebellion, "you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." And you know, they did refuse and rebel, and the sword of the Babylonians did ultimately come. "How has the faithful city has become a harlot. It was full of justice." Now, does Revelation talk about a harlot city? Revelation 17 and Revelation 18, it does. Jerusalem was to be God's bride, calls her Zion, and now it says, "You've become like a harlot." "Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water. Your princes are rebellious and companions of thieves. Everyone loves bribes and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them. Therefore the Lord says, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, 'Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries, and I will take vengeance on My enemies. I will turn my hand against you, and

thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away your alloy. I will restore your judges as the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward, you will be called the city of righteousness and the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her penitents with righteousness. The destruction and transgression of sinners shall be together. And those who forsake the Lord will be consumed. For they will be ashamed as the terebinth trees which you have desired." They were worshiping under these trees. "And you will be embarrassed because of the gardens," where they have their idols, "which you have chosen. For you will be as a terebinth whose leaf fades, and as a garden that has no water. The strong shall be as tinder, and the work of it as a spark." It's talking about judgment coming, like the tinder and the spark. "Both will burn together, and no one will quench them." Isaiah and Jeremiah talked about them struggling because of judgment, and that they would be burned with unquenchable fire. Now, did this prophecy of Isaiah come true? Because they did not turn. They temporarily repented during the reign of Hezekiah and they found some deliverance then. And even during the reign of Josiah. But then ultimately, the Babylonians came and destroyed the city.

And the last section here, we've just got a couple minutes, Isaiah chapter 5. Now, we're jumping from Isaiah 1 to chapter 5 'cause we're doing these things in segments. And verse 1 through 7, "Now let me sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved." By the way, Isaiah writes many of his prophecies in poetry. And you know, something is lost when you go from Hebrew to English. You know, if I tell you a poem in English, roses are red, violets are blue, whatever, there'll usually be some rhyme to it. But when you take the poetry from one language to another, sometimes you lose some of the rhyme of it. But this was written often in poetry. And it's a lot more beautiful, I understand, in the Hebrew. "Let me sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard. My well beloved has a vineyard." Now, where do you find something about my well beloved in a vineyard? Isn't that also in what they call Canticles, the Song of Solomon? "On a very fruitful hill. And he dug it up and he cleared out its stones, and he planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and he also made a winepress in it, so he expected it to bring forth good grapes. But it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge please between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" Can you think of a parable in Luke chapter 13, where Jesus talks about a man that had a fig tree planted in his vineyard? And it didn't bring forth any fruit. And the owner said, "Just cut it down, it's taking up ground. These are fruitless trees." And he said, "Oh, give it one more year." The gardener said, "Let me dig around it, let me fertilize it, I'll irrigate it, and then hopefully it'll bring forth fruit. I'll do everything that can possibly be done, let's be patient." And so, God is so patient with his people back then. And is he patient with his people now? I'm not sure, but it could be true that the worldliness that existed in the church in the days of Isaiah might be existing in the church today, what do you think? Was there warnings that came they had to repent or there'd be judgment? Yeah, "What more could be done to my vineyard? And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, I'll tell you. Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, it brought forth wild grapes? Please let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away its hedge." The walls of Jerusalem were broken down. "And it shall be burned. And I'll break down its wall, and it will be trampled down. I will lay it waste. It will not be pruned or dug, and there will come up briars and thorns. And I'll also command the clouds that they do not rain upon it, for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are its pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression. And he looked for righteousness, but behold, a cry." He said that there'd be judgment because the vineyard did not turn.

Now, this happened twice. God's people were judged, the very prophecy that Isaiah made came true in the days of the Babylonians, Jeremiah, when the city was destroyed, the wall was destroyed, everything was burnt. It was thorns came up on the land of Judah and Jerusalem. He restored them, gave them another chance. And after the teaching of Christ, Jesus' message was very much like that of Isaiah. He said, "This generation will not pass away until there won't be left one stone upon another." The same thing happened again. Now, has God changed? He's calling again for His church to repent. And I think that message is going out. What did Jesus say to the--you read in Matthew chapter 20 and chapter 22, he tells these parables about the vineyard workers, who abuse the owner of the vineyard, and they did not give him the fruit. And he gives two or three parables about the vineyard. And I think he's pointing back to that passage there in Isaiah chapter 5. The vineyard represents the house of God. Well, I hope you got something out of our introduction to Isaiah. And I want to remind you if you tuned in a little late, we have a free offer that's available to everybody, and it's called "The Point of No Return." This is a great book, it talks about how do you--how do you get the point of no return like in the unpardonable sin? And what is the unpardonable sin? You'll really enjoy this book by Joe Crews. And if you like a free copy, you can download it by

texting SH051 to 40544. And that--ask for offer number 177 if you call. The number is 866-788-3966. That's 866-STUDY-MORE. God bless you, friends. Lord willing, we will study the next lesson in Isaiah next week.

Male announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the key word on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen. And be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with "Amazing Facts" wherever and whenever you want, and most important to share it with others.

Announcer: Amazing Facts, changed lives. male: It was--it was ongoing with me. I would get up and drink. I would go to work and drink. I would come home and drink. And that was--that was my way of life. I had an older sister, and in 2008, we received a phone call from her husband saying that she was involved in a very serious home accident. She had fallen outside on her patio. It was a concrete patio, and she hit her head because she was in a drunken stupor. And she needed emergency brain surgery because of the trauma that she had suffered. And so, they were able to stop the bleeding in her brain, but her organs started shutting down one by one. So here I was, you know, hadn't had a drink, being a full blown alcoholic myself, hadn't had a drink in probably a full day, which was, you know, a lifetime for me. And during the time we were watching there and they said that she wasn't going to make it, and we had made the decision as a group, you know, with her children present and her husband that they were just going to go ahead and pull the plug. During that time, watching her fade away, God forgive me, but I sat there asking her to die fast so I could go get a drink. And you know, I didn't even see it then, I didn't see how bad I was at that time. But you know, I look back at it now and it just tears me up. Alcohol, that's what it does to you. I was walking out to go to work one morning with my breakfast, which was a six pack of beer. And as I was climbing into my truck, it just hit me that it was enough. So I turned around, I took the six pack of beer, and I threw it in the trash can, and I went and told my wife I needed help. And there's two things I never do, ask for help and throw away beer. And you know, thank God I was able to do both. Well, when I finally got to the hospital, and they came and got me and took me in. And when they did a blood alcohol on me, they had to do it twice because they weren't quite sure it was right, but it was 0.38. They were all amazed I was even able to walk in there, let alone, you know, being conscious. It was about two months after I'd got out of treatment and starting my fresh life. I had left home, left my wife, and I was going to start my new life of sobriety, and she wasn't going to be a part of it. So I moved out and I was on my way to the store one morning when I was T-boned, broadsided by an oncoming SUV on the driver's side door of my truck. And this driver was doing an estimated 65 to 70 miles an hour. And he smacked on my side of the door. I woke up in the passenger seat of the truck. And I remember coming to and hearing people standing outside, "Look, he's still alive." There was hairline fractures in my pelvis and there was a compression fracture in my spine. And so, on all intents and purposes, I walked away from an accident I had no business living. Well, with a broken back, I wasn't allowed to be vertical for but very short periods of time. And I wasn't very mobile with a fractured pelvis, so I was forced to move back home. And you know, thank God I've got a stubborn wife who was willing to take me back and put up with all this. During my recovery, the only thing I could really do was watch television. And so, as I was thumbing through the channels, I noticed a gentleman. And I happened to stop because he was proclaiming that you can't prove biblically that the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday and that it's not biblical. I thought, "Well, you know what, I think I can do this." You know, so I took up my Bible and I did something strange to me, which was actually study. You know, and over the course of several months of watching this man, who I would later discover was Pastor Doug Batchelor, I started trying to disprove everything he was saying. And the more I read and the more I studied, the more I found out that not only could I not disprove it, I was believing it. I realized it was the truth. Then I started soaking up everything that "Amazing Facts" had--I was at their website, you know, doing all the reading, I was looking at the Sabbath truths. I was, you know, downloading, streaming everything they had, and I was really, really getting it, and it helped me so much. Over a process of about three months while studying, you know, with Doug Batchelor and the "Amazing Facts" team and then, you know, of course my Bible. But over that three months, I had fallen in love with Christ like I had never had before. And not only was my back and my pelvis healed, but my soul was healed. And I experienced an emotional and a mental healing that, you know, I had been longing for, for years. I've got to do something. What do I do next? So, I looked up in the phone book and I found the number for the local pastor. I called him and I said, "Hi, my name is Brian, I've just been converted. Where do I go?" And the poor guy was like, "Brian, it's nice to meet you. Converted from what and go where?" I said, "That's what I want to know." But we had a little laugh over that and he thought it was funny. And before we knew it, I was, you know, heart and soul into this little church. And I was studying with the pastor and decided, you know, I



want to be baptized, I want to be rebaptized. And we thought, "Great." So, I did some study, and we agreed that I was going to be baptized on this date. Well, the next morning, my wife asked me and said, "You realize what day this is?" I said, "Well, it's Sabbath." And you know, Sabbath was amazing in itself, but she said, "Look at the calendar." And when I looked at the calendar, on that day was my one year anniversary of my sobriety. I was being baptized one year after being sober. And I just thought, you know, there's no such thing as coincidence. That was just amazing God would work that for me. God has done amazing things with my life, and I have to give Him, you know, all the credit because short of just responding, you know, I've done nothing. And it's been Him, and it's just pleasure, absolute pleasure be called a child of God. I am really thankful that God used "Amazing Facts" television program and Pastor Doug Batchelor to make a change in my life. announcer: Together, we have spread the gospel much farther than ever before. Thank you for your support.

Announcer: Amazing Facts, changed lives. Ruben: You know, we grew up in a neighborhood up in the Midwest that was a pretty bad neighborhood. And when I became a teenager, I started using drugs. I was on--I started using meth when I was, like, I think 16, 15, something like that. I was having some problems in my life I really didn't know how to deal with. The only thing I really knew was violence. So, this night here, I was going to inflict violence on myself. I was really high and really depressed, so I took--you know, I had this .40 caliber. So, I remember I put one in the chamber, and I stuck it to the side of my head like this. And that gun had a hair-trigger, you know? And I remember I was tapping it because a part of me said, "No, I don't want to do this," but there was something very evil present there saying, "Do it." I just said to myself, I said, "God, if You're real, show yourself to me." My mother took me into church when I was a little kid, and we used to sing "Jesus Loves Me." And I remembered that song. I started playing it in my mind, and almost had like a vision of me as a little kid. You know, in Sabbath school, we used to bang those sticks together and sing "Jesus Loves Me." And I heard that in my mind. So, I just said, "Wow." So, I just kind of, like, put the gun down, and I kind of fell on my bedside there, and I said, "Lord." I just basically just prayed this crazy prayer. I said--you know, I told Him everything that was wrong with me. And I remember one day, I was driving around, I kind of felt lost. And I drove by this church, and I'd seen Tom out there, Tom was just out there watering the flowers, you know? Tom: So, I caught a vision out of the side of my eye of this big, husky guy with the tattoos walking up. And he's saying hello, and I said--so, I asked him if I could help him. And he told me that he drives by the church on occasion, and every time he goes by, he's thinking that he should stop in. Ruben: After he showed me around the church, you know, I was like, "Okay, man, it's nice meeting you," and this and that. So, I jumped in my car and I started heading down the driveway. And the next thing you know, in like my peripheral vision, I see him coming around the corner, like Jerry Rice running a football. No, not that fast, but you know, he was taking off after me. And he says, "Hey, hey, hey, hold on, hold on." Tom: I asked him if he would like to have some Bible studies, and he said yeah. Ruben: He would come by the house, and we'd all start--we'd start hiding the beer cans and trying to air out the weed smell. And there was a presence that came with Tom that was comforting. You know what I mean? Even though I wasn't taking the Bible studies as serious as I should have looking back, there was just a presence about him being there in the house that was comforting. I told Tom, I said, "Tom, you know, you can't win everybody." Tom: I looked at him and I knew. I said to him, "Ruben, I never get anybody." I said, "It's the Holy Spirit who will do that." And I kind of in my heart knew that the Holy Spirit was going to work on Ruben. Ruben: So, then Tom kind of left the picture for a while. And then I think one day at my mother's house, they were watching "The Final Events of Bible Prophecy." So, I watched that, and I remember the scene where they had the hellfire and stuff. You know, they're outside the city, and it showed the hellfire coming down and burning people and stuff. And I remember saying to myself, "That's where I would be right there." After the hellfire scene, I saw the saints, and the city, and the New Jerusalem, and Jesus recreating the earth. And I said, "I want that to be me and my family." There was something about the way Doug preached and things that I felt that touched me. Because he's kind of like myself, you know, he's--he didn't--he didn't grow up like that. You know, he'd done drugs and things, so I kind of found these common grounds that I had with him. And I liked how he just kind of, like, kept it real with his preaching. And then Pastor Rodney came to the church, and I got to know him very well, and we started doing some finishing studies. He wanted to make sure I understand what I was doing and things, and baptized me, my wife, my brother. No matter what you've done, where you come from, where you've been, no matter how bad of a sinner you think you are, the Lord Jesus loves you no matter what you've done.

Doug: Friends, it's because of God's blessing and your support thousands of others, just like Ruben, have found Jesus and eternal life.