

- God delights to forgive, but His mercy must be received (2 Cor 6:2). God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, for it is His desire and will that all be saved and come to repentance (Ezekiel 33:11).

4. Warning & Hope (1:21–31)

(i) *The Faithless City Exposed, 1:21–23*

- Jerusalem's spiritual & moral decay is laid bare. Jerusalem is described as:
 - A harlot. Once known for her covenant faithfulness to the LORD, Jerusalem has forsaken her "marriage" to God. Her idolatry and political alliances with pagan nations are portrayed as acts of spiritual adultery.
 - A city of injustice. The city originally established to reflect God's justice and righteousness has become a place of violence, corruption, and oppression.

Corruption is pictured as silver turned to dross, wine diluted with water. Likewise, our spiritual lives become corrupted when holiness is mixed with sin and truth diluted with compromise.

- Leaders are described as rebels and companions of thieves - accepting bribes, perverting justice, and neglecting the fatherless and widows. Leadership failure leads to societal collapse (Prov 29:2). When the people of God abandon truth and tolerate sin, they lose their witness. God desires covenant faithfulness marked by truth, justice, and obedience.

(ii) *God's Promise of Restoration, 1:24–26*

- God reveals Himself as:
 - *The LORD of hosts* - the Commander of heaven's armies.
 - *The Mighty One of Israel* - the invincible Defender of His people.
- Judgment is certain, but it is not the end. God will refine and redeem. Instead of destroying them for good, He will restore them in real righteousness.
 - God promises to act decisively against His enemies.
 - God promises purification rather than destruction.
 Likewise, believers should view trials as instruments of refinement - means by which God strengthens faith and produces holiness.
- God promises renewed leadership characterized by righteousness and wisdom. Fulfillment:
 - Near: post-exilic restoration – Zerubbabel, Ezra & Nehemiah.
 - Ultimate: Christ's Millennial Kingdom (2:1-4; 11:1-10; Rev 20).

- Jerusalem will finally bear her intended name: *"The city of righteousness, the faithful city."* It awaits the return of Christ and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom. Jerusalem is God's chosen city and will remain so in His future redemptive plan. Though presently corrupt, she will one day be restored as the center of righteousness under Christ's reign. During the thousand-year reign of Christ, righteous judgment will again flow from Jerusalem, and the saints will share in His rule (1 Cor 6:2).

(iii) *Final Separation, 1:27–31*

- Isaiah concludes with a sobering contrast:
 - The Redeemed Remnant - restored through righteousness.
 - The Unrepentant Destroyed – transgressors and sinners face destruction.
- God will not tolerate hypocrisy or idolatry. Idolaters - symbolized by pagan oaks and gardens associated with Canaanite worship - will become like what they worship: barren, withered, and lifeless. Idolatry leads to barrenness and unquenchable judgment.

Conclusion

- God desires transformed hearts, not empty religion. Worship is measured by life change, not religious activities.
- Isaiah's call still stands: *"Come now, and let us reason together... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."*

Key Question: Are we merely religious - or truly repentant and transformed?