

ISAIAH'S COVENANT LAWSUIT

ISAIAH 1

The first chapter of Isaiah follows the same basic outline that was used in an ancient legal lawsuit. This outline looked back to the formation of the covenant in Deuteronomy.

1:2a	Invocation of Witnesses	<i>Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth</i>
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The Lord calls the heavens and the earth to bear witness against the way in which the covenant has been transgressed. This is poetic alliteration in the Hebrew text.

- שָׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם - Listen O heavens
- וְהִאֲזִינִי אֶרֶץ - And hear O earth

1:2b	Preamble	<i>For the LORD speaks, "Sons I have reared and brought up"</i>
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The Lord identifies Himself as the plaintiff. His complaint will be against the sons that He has reared and brought up.

This is not merely the story of two independent parties who could not get along. Israel was given her birth by the Lord and was created to be in a special relationship with Him.

1:2c	Historical Prologue	<i>But they have revolted against Me.</i> <i>3 "An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand."</i> <i>4 Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him</i>
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This is more than a case of misunderstanding. It was an issue of open revolt as Israel rebelled against her Sovereign Lord and King.

When the Lord says that His people do not know or understand, He is using these as relationship terms, similar to when the Bible speaks of a man “knowing his wife.”

1:5	Curses	Where will you be stricken again... - The whole head is sick, - And the whole heart is faint. - From the sole of the foot even to the head
1:6		Your land is desolate Your cities are burned with fire Your fields-- strangers are devouring them in your presence
1:9		Unless the LORD of hosts Had left us a few survivors, We would be like Sodom, We would be like Gomorrah Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom Give ear to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah.
1:11		What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?

Notice that Isaiah says that Judah would be like Sodom and Gomorrah but for the grace of God. He then goes on to address the people of Israel as:

- You rulers of Sodom
- You people of Gomorrah

Revelation 11:8 uses this same sort of symbol when it speaks of *the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.*

1:16	Call to Repentance	Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless; Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.
1:18		Come now, and let us reason together

1:21		How the faithful city has become a harlot - She <i>who</i> was full of justice! - Righteousness once lodged in her - But now murderers
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In light of these judgments, the Lord calls His people to repent and to return to Him. They are told that, if they repent, their sins will be cleansed.

This theme of cleansing of sins will be further developed in Isaiah when we come to the prophecies of the Suffering Servant.

1. God is righteous (1:15).
2. God demands righteousness (1:16-17).
3. God freely provides what He demands (1:18).

1:24	Promie of Future Blessings	The Mighty One of Israel declares, Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries, And avenge Myself on My foes
1:25		I will also turn My hand against you After that you will be called The city of righteousness A faithful city Zion will be redeemed with justice And her repentant ones with righteousness
1:28		But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together And those who forsake the LORD shall come to an end