

ISAIAH 1:1-9 CHOOSING ANOTHER WAY

¹ *The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

² *Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. ³ The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."*

⁴ *Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.*

⁵ *Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. ⁶ From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil.*

⁷ *Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers. ⁸ The Daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a field of melons, like a city under siege. ⁹ Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.*

Isaiah describes the universal condition of the world in terms of Israel. Even God's chosen and redeemed people cannot sustain their obedience to God. Three quarters of a millennium later, St. Paul sums up the similar situation among God's people in his letter to the church in Rome. "*There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*" (Romans 3:23). Now, in the 21st century, when we look at the Church, the words of Isaiah ring as true today as they did some 700 years before Christ.

As in the time of Noah, there has always been a remnant through whom the promises of God have been maintained. Not all Israelites chose to leave Egypt, but only those who did what God, through Moses, instructed. Likewise, the return to Judah from Babylon was not for everyone. In both cases those who bought into the culture and became more comfortable as people of the world rather than people of God chose not to return.

Our bondage and our exile are spiritual rather than physical or geographic, but we are very much enslaved by sin and separated from God. The Good News is that God has provided through the waters of baptism and the blood of the Lamb for the survival of the people of his promise. Like those who have gone before us, God has provided, but we must choose to obey in order to be a part of the remnant.

Father, help me to choose to turn away from the ways of the world with which I have become so familiar and comfortable. Rather, convict me of my need to learn your ways and obey your will. Amen.