

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
August 1, 2016

Isaiah 1:1–2:5. What Isaiah saw.

Luke 1:1–38. The announcements of the birth of John and Jesus.

Job 1:1–12. Job’s prosperity and Satan’s charge.

COMMENTS:

Isaiah 1:1–2:5. Isaiah begins with a courtroom scene. In **1:2-4**, God convenes the court and states the charges. This is followed by God presenting His case and pronouncing the nation guilty (**1:5-15**). God, then, gives His people the opportunity to confess their sins and receive forgiveness (**1:16-31**). **Chapter 2:1-5** records the vision God gave to Isaiah about the future of Jerusalem and God’s future Temple in His Kingdom. As far as the sins of the people, what is especially egregious and disgusting is that those involved in the sins are *also* involved in “worship” of God (**1:10-15**)—they were religious hypocrites! They attended the temple services and brought a multitude of sacrifices to the Lord; but their hearts were far from God. The sacrifices were not expressions of love and dedication, and therefore could never please God. Love for God as the Greatest Good instead of a Means to temporal goods would have resolved all of this wickedness. Judah’s worship of Jehovah was iniquity, not piety; and God was sick of it! Instead of lifting up their hands in prayer, their hands were stained with blood (**1:15**) because of their many sins. Isaiah didn’t stop with the diagnosis, he gave the prescription, because he wanted Judah to get right with God (**Isa. 1:16–31**). The leaders of the people are compared to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (**1:10**) The word translated “*reason*” (וַיִּשְׁפֹּט) in **1:18** means “to decide a case in court”; but instead of pronouncing judgment, the Judge offered pardon! If they would cleanse themselves by confessing and turning from sin (**1:16–17**), then God would wipe the record clean in response to their faith (**1:18**). God had every reason to punish His people for their sins; but in His grace and mercy, He offered them His pardon. What were some of the sins that the nation needed to confess and put away? Isaiah named murder (**1:21**), robbery, bribery, and exploiting the helpless (**1:23**), as well as the worship of heathen idols (**29**). Because of their idolatry, they were harlots. They maintained a religious facade to cover up their crimes. What would God do if the people did *not* repent? He would send a fiery judgment that would purge the dross and burn up those whose rebellion had made them His enemies (**1:24–31**). Isaiah’s promise of hope was that one day Jerusalem would be a “city of righteousness, the faithful city” (**1:26**). In **2:1-5**, we have the proclamation of God’s future promise regarding the temple of the Lord. The prophet looked ahead to a time when God’s righteous kingdom would be established and the Temple would become the center for the worldwide worship of the Lord. In Isaiah’s day, the Jews were adopting the false gods of the Gentiles; but the day would come when the Gentiles would abandon their idols and worship the true God of Israel. The nations would also lay down their weapons and stop warring. These promises must not be “spiritualized” and applied to the church, for they describe a literal kingdom of righteousness and peace. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt, and the Word of God will go forth from Jerusalem. In the light of the future glory of God’s temple, Isaiah appealed to the people to “walk in the light of the Lord” (**2:5**). Christians today have a similar motivation as we await the return of Christ for His church (1 John 2:28–3:3). As I have noted many times, one cannot live the Christian way of life, the spiritual life, apart from the eternal perspective. Living in light of our future with the Lord and His kingdom

was not only the theme of the Old Testament as we have noted in Hebrews 11, it is the core of the Christian mindset (Col. 3:1-4; Matt. 6:19-24).

Luke 1:1–38. As far as the historical and spiritual condition, it was indeed dark days for the nation of Israel. The people had heard no prophetic Word from God for 400 years, not since Malachi had promised the coming of Elijah (Mal. 4:5–6). The spiritual leaders were shackled by tradition and, in some instances, corruption; and their king, Herod the Great, was a tyrant. He had nine wives, one of whom he had executed for no apparent reason. But no matter how dark the days become, there are always faithful believers like we see with Zacharias and Elizabeth in the first part of this section. Note their virtue: **Luke 1:6**, *And they were both righteous (δίκαιοι) before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (ἄμεμπτοι).* Those who truly live for God may be few, but they are always recognized and blessed by God. Six blessings are noted with respect to the promised birth of a son, John the Baptist, in **14–17**: (1) He will be a joy and delight to Zacharias. (2) He will be great in the sight of the Lord. (3) He is never to take wine or other fermented drink. (4) He will be filled with the Holy Spirit “from his mother’s womb” (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ). (5) He would bring many of the people of Israel back to God. (6) He would go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, which is a reference to the last words of the OT (Mal. 3:1; 4:5–6). However, Zechariah had doubts because he and Elizabeth were old, and he was punished for this lack of faith with the inability to speak (**20**). Beginning in **26** we have the announcement of the birth of Jesus to Mary, who was a virgin at the time. It was in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy when Gabriel brought a second birth announcement to the young virgin in Nazareth named Mary. They especially despised the people from Nazareth. But God in His grace chose a girl from Nazareth in Galilee to be the mother of the promised Messiah! When it comes to Mary, people tend to go to one of two extremes. They either magnify her so much that Jesus takes second place (Luke 1:32), or they ignore her and fail to give her the esteem she deserves (Luke 1:48). Elizabeth, filled with the Spirit, called her “*the mother of my Lord*” (Luke 1:43); and that is reason enough to honor her. What do we know about Mary? She was a Jewess of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, and a virgin (Isa. 7:14). She was engaged to a carpenter in Nazareth named Joseph (Matt. 13:55), and apparently both of them were poor (Luke 2:24). Mary’s response reveals her humility and honesty before God. Note that Gabriel affirmed both the deity and the humanity of Jesus. As Mary’s son, He would be human; as Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32), He would be the Son of God (Luke 1:35)—“For unto us a Child is born [His humanity], unto us a Son is given [His deity] (Isa. 9:6).” The emphasis is on the greatness of the Son (cf. Luke 1:15), not the greatness of the mother. But He would also be a King, inherit David’s throne, and reign over Israel forever! If we interpret literally what Gabriel said in **Luke 1:30–31**, then we should also interpret literally what he said in **Luke 1:32–33**. He was referring to God’s covenant with David (2 Sam. 7) and His kingdom promises to the people of Israel (Isa. 9:1–7; 11–12; 61; 66; Jer. 33). Jesus came to earth to be the Savior of the world, but He also came to fulfill the promises God made to the Jewish fathers (Rom. 15:14). Today, Jesus is enthroned in heaven (Acts 2:29–36), but it is not on David’s throne. One day Jesus will return and establish His righteous kingdom on earth, and then these promises will be fulfilled. Mary knew what would happen, but she did not know how it would happen. Her question in **Luke 1:34** was not an evidence of unbelief (cf. Luke 1:18); rather, it was an expression of faith. She believed the promise, but she did not understand how. How could a virgin give birth to a child? Gabriel explained that this would be a miracle, the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Joseph, her betrothed, would not be the father of the child (Matt.

1:18–25), even though Jesus would be legally identified as the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23; 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42). It's possible that some people thought Mary had been unfaithful to Joseph and that Jesus was “born of fornication” (John 8:41). This was a part of the pain that Mary had to bear all her life (Luke 2:35). Gabriel was careful to point out that the Baby would be a “holy thing” and would not share the sinful human nature of man. Jesus knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), He did no sin (1 Peter 2:22), and He had no sin (1 John 3:5). His body was prepared for Him by the Spirit of God (Heb. 10:5) who “overshadowed” Mary. That word is applied to the presence of God in the holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple (Ex. 40:35). The angel ended his message by giving Mary a word of encouragement: her aged relative Elizabeth was with child, proving that “*with God nothing shall be impossible.*” What is incredulous to me is when so-called Christians question the Virgin Birth. They do not have trouble with God creating the universe out of nothing, but when it comes to the Virgin Birth, they have problems. There is just one word for that: stupid! Note Mary's believing response as she surrenders herself to God as His willing servant. She experienced the grace of God (**Luke 1:30**) and believed the Word of God, and therefore she could be used by the Spirit to accomplish the will of God. A “*handmaid*” was the lowest kind of female servant, which shows how much Mary trusted God. She belonged totally to the Lord, body (Luke 1:38), soul (Luke 1:46), and spirit (Luke 1:47). What an example for us to follow! (Rom. 12:1–2).

Job 1:1–12. The **first five verses** describe Job's character and prosperity. He was a man of virtue who had a large family, great wealth, and friends. While it is true that his three friends hurt Job deeply and wronged him greatly, they were still his friends. When they heard about Job's calamities, they traveled a long distance to visit him; and they sat in silence as they sympathized with him. Their mistake was in thinking they had to explain Job's situation and tell him how to get right with God. Their attitude is common in Christianity as seen when Christians presume to tell suffering fellow believers why they must be suffering at the hands of God. The Word of Faith cult believers in Tulsa are especially bad about telling grieving believers—who are suffering from diseases like cancer or who have lost a family member—that it is because of lack of faith or some sin in their lives. They have no clue how ignorant and evil they are when they presume to tell others what is on God's mind. As we have noted on occasion, one would have to have direct access to the mind of God to know exactly why God allows some evil things to happen to believers on specific cases. In **verses 6-12** we see Satan's first accusation. He accuses Job of serving God as a means to gain other blessings. The charge is that Job does not love God and was more like a prostitute who gave himself to the Lord for financial gain. This is a charge that Satan continues to make against all of God's children. Satan, still, does not understand how anyone could love and serve God for God's own sake. This spiritual prostitution continues to be a major problem in contemporary Christianity in that God is used by many as a means to other ends/good rather than the other way around. The only time many believers are interested in God is when they need for Him to do something for them, like help them handle problems, which problems are generally due to lack of spiritual virtue in the first place. This attitude is not isolated to the prosperity gospel groups; in many Bible churches God is viewed little more than A Giant Problem Solver. It is imperative that we get back to the classical view of God and of the spiritual life where God (in Total Truth) is loved and pursued for His own sake as the greatest goods, the ultimate goods. Note a couple more things in this section. First, Satan has access to God's throne in heaven. Thanks to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, many people have the mistaken idea that Satan is ruling this world from hell (“Better to reign in Hell, than serve in heav'n”). But

Satan will not be cast into the lake of fire until before the final judgment (Rev. 20:10ff). Today, he is free to go about on the earth (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8) and can even go into God's presence in heaven. A second thing to note is that God found no fault with Job, but Satan did. God's statement in Job 1:8 echoes the description of Job in verse 1, but Satan questioned it. The word "Satan" means "adversary, one who opposes the law." This is a courtroom scene, and God and Satan each deliver different verdicts about Job. There was nothing in Job's life that compelled God to cause him to suffer. But Satan said "Guilty!" because he is the accuser of God's people and finds nothing good in them. This is also an attack on God in essence saying that 'You are not a God worthy of worship! You have to pay people to honor You.' We should all ask ourselves, "Why do we live for and worship God?" for His own sake or for some other *perceived* greater good?

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don