



Isaiah 1:21-31

The Collapse of Society & God’s Promised Deliverers

The Lord is now focusing on the deterioration of the Jewish society, comparing the past glory to the present state of compromise. It is similar to Jesus’ rebuke of the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2 ... “But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! **Look how far you have fallen!** Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.” (Rev. 2:4–5 NLT-SE) Unfortunately, here in Isaiah’s prophecy, God goes into much greater detail when it comes to their fallen state.

In the second half of the rebuke, the Lord mercifully lets His people know that He will be bringing them “deliverers” who will provide such profound restoration that they will eventually be known as “the Righteous City and the Faithful City!” Even in the midst of His thunderous rebuke, God chooses to breathe hope to His people. His kindness and compassion are evident, still this section ends with the harsh reality of their brokenness and consequences that will not be so easily remedied.

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 1:21 How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. ²² Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. ²³ Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow’s cause does not come to them. ²⁴ Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. ²⁵ I will turn my hand against you and will melt away your across as with lye and remove all your alloy.</p>	<p>ap 1:21 Or “those who cause to execute,” a possible indictment of judges who condemned the innocent to death.</p> <p>aq 1:22 What was silver (redemption) has now become dross. The choice wine (fullness and gifts of the Spirit) has become watered down and unintelligible. The gifts of God have been diluted by fleshly lives that did not measure up to the standard of holiness—the choice wine of the Spirit ruined (watered down) by the works of the flesh.</p> <p>ar 1:24 Or “Woe!” The Septuagint reads “Woe to those who have power in Israel.”</p> <p>as 1:24 Sadly, because the once faithful people and their leaders turned away from what is right, God now calls them his “adversaries” and his “foes.” To fight against the sovereign God means that he may turn and fight against you.</p> <p>at 1:25 The Septuagint adds a sentence not found in Hebrew: “I will destroy those who refuse to obey and remove the lawbreakers from your midst.” The Hebrew is “I will turn my hand against you and smelt away all your dross and remove your alloy.”</p>	<p>Isaiah 1:21 Look how the once faithful city has become as unfaithful as a prostitute! She who was once the “Center of Justice,” where righteousness made its home, is now the dwelling place of murderers! ap ²² She was once like sterling silver, now only mixture; once so pure, now diluted like watered-down wine. aq ²³ Your rulers are rebellious and companions of crooks. They are self-centered racketeers who love a bribe and who chase after payoffs. They don’t defend the fatherless or consider the rights of a helpless widow. ²⁴ Therefore, here is what the Sovereign One decrees, the Lord God of Angel Armies, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, ar I will get relief from my adversaries and avenge myself on my foes! as ²⁵ I will bring my fiery hand upon you and burn you and purify you into something clean.” at</p>

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>²⁶ And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.”</p> <p>²⁷ Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. ²⁸ But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed.</p> <p>²⁹ For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen.</p> <p>³⁰ For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water.</p> <p>³¹ And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.</p>	<p>au 1:26 God promises a restoration of deliverers (Obad. 21) or “judges” and “wise counselors.” Apostolic judges and prophetic counselors are on their way. They are sent to challenge the status quo and make us consider our ways. The result of their needed ministries is that God’s people will become the Righteous City and be restored to be the City (Church) of Faithfulness. This is Isaiah’s glimpse of the New Jerusalem, the Bridal City coming to the earth. It will be a “City of Righteousness,” for God will dwell with his people.</p> <p>av 1:26 See also Gal. 4:26.</p> <p>aw 1:27 The Septuagint uses the word mercy.</p> <p>ax 1:29 The Hebrew word for “sacred groves” (or “terebinth”) rhymes with the Hebrew word for “false gods.” It is a play on words that is common to the prophets. The Baal cult worshiped at the groves of sacred oaks. See Ezek. 6:13; 20:28; Hos. 4:13,</p>	<p>²⁶“I will restore deliverers as in former times and your wise counselors as at the beginning. au Only then will you be called the Righteous City and the Faithful City!” av</p> <p>²⁷ Yes, Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant converts with righteousness. aw ²⁸ There will be a shattering of rebels and sinners together, and those who forsake the Lord will be consumed.</p> <p>²⁹ You will reap shame from the idols you once delighted in and you will be humiliated by your cultic sacred groves, ax where you chose to worship.</p> <p>³⁰ You will be like an oak tree with faded, fallen leaves and like a withered, waterless garden.</p> <p>³¹ The “powerful elite” will become like kindling and their evil deeds like sparks—both will burn together and no one will be able to put out the fire.</p>

- Commentary: Bible Knowledge Commentary, John A. Martin

- **1:24-26.** God’s judging will bring Him relief from the displeasure caused by His foes (enemies within the covenant community). It will be like a purging agent, getting rid of the dross (v. 25; cf. v. 22), leaving only the pure silver. Vengeance was not for the purpose of “getting even” with unfaithful people. Its purpose was to turn the nation back to a proper relationship to God. The Lord will see that the right kind of judges are in office as in former times (David’s and Solomon’s empires), and Jerusalem will once again be called the City of Righteousness and the Faithful City (v. 26). References to “the faithful city” (vv. 21, 26) serve as a literary device called an **inclusio** to tie these two verses together.
- **Inclusio** (sometimes double inclusio): Repetition of same language at beginning and end of a section of literature forming bookends. An inclusio tells the reader that what is in the middle of the two bookends is support or an explanation of what the words making up the bookends.
 - **Example #1 Mark** – Inclusio Theme: The identity of Jesus-- He is the Son of God
 - This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, **the Son of God**. (Mark. 1:1 NLT-SE)
 - When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, “This man truly was **the Son of God!**” (Mark. 15:39 NLT-SE)
 - **Example #2 Luke** – Inclusio Theme: The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah fulfills what was promised in the Old Testament

- ¹ Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been **fulfilled** among us. ² They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. ³ Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, ⁴ so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught. (Luke. 1:1–4 NLT-SE)
- ⁴⁴ Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be **fulfilled**.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ (Luke. 24:44–47 NLT-SE)
- **Example #3 John** – Inclusio Theme: Anyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus will receive eternal life
 - But to all who **believed him** and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John. 1:12 NLT-SE)
 - ³⁰ The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by **believing in him** you will have life by the power of his name. (John. 20:30–31 NLT-SE)
- **1:27-31**. The contrast between the fate of the remnant and the wicked is detailed in these verses. The remnant will dwell in the new redeemed city of Jerusalem (Zion; cf. v. 8) where God’s justice will be present (cf. v. 26). Rebels (cf. vv. 20, 23) will perish, after being embarrassed that they were ever involved in idol worship near sacred oak trees (cf. 57:5) and in gardens (cf. 65:3; 66:17). Whereas they once enjoyed worshiping idols (probably including Baal), in those pleasant surroundings they would become like fading oak trees and a dry garden. Though once strong (like a mighty man) in defying God the unrighteous and his work ... will burn. This unquenchable burning probably refers to the destruction by the Babylonian army as well as eternal judgment.

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. Use the very negative description of Judah’s fallen society in verses 21-25 to paint a positive portrait of Judah’s previous state.
2. Worshipping false gods is likely the primary reason for Judah’s demise. Discuss why you think this specific inequity was so devastating to the Jewish culture?
3. A lot of people are not necessarily sensitive to “false” things in their lives. Name something in your life that gets presented to you as “true” but is really “false.” What are some ways you can train yourself to be more discerning when it comes to things that are biblically false?

4. If the Lord were to send “deliverers” to America, who might they be, where might they come from, and what might they do to bring reformation to our nation?

5. What are some specific ways the body of Evangel might bring reformation to our city (i.e., homelessness, drug addiction, sex trafficking, lackluster economy, public health, quality schools, etc.)?