

Part II, Lesson 32

Isaiah

The Lord is Salvation

Worship,
One

Isaiah
58:1-4

*Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex
Curriculum*

Isaiah Part II, Lesson 32

Worship, One

Isaiah 58:1-4

Today we begin a series of lessons on the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah...several lessons on Worship. The word used in Isaiah is “fast.” Fasting literally means to do without food or drink for a period of time. This was to keep the mind focused on God and on the relationship with Him. It came to mean a time to praise God and thank Him. The Jews of Isaiah’s time had many days of fasting through the year, holidays. There are lists which include as many as twenty-five fasts during the year. There were seven fasts that were recognized by all Jews, and the people tried to be at the Temple in Jerusalem for all these.

In the first few verses of Isaiah 58, God accuses them of mistreating the fast. Read Isaiah 58:1-4. Isaiah is told to “Shout it aloud...” God has something very important to say. We could ask, “isn’t everything God says important?” And, the answer is obvious, yes. Anything God says is very important. As a matter of fact, what God says is more important than anything anyone else can say. It seems that here God is emphasizing just how important it is for Isaiah to be sure that the people have this specific message.

Since it is most important to God for the people to understand what He is about to say, Isaiah is to shout as loud as he can, and he is to raise his voice like a trumpet. Have you ever heard the piercing sound of a trumpet? It can be pretty loud. The phrase, “Shout aloud” literally means “Call with the throat.” Scream! Even if he has to shout above the noise of the market place, Isaiah is to make himself heard.

God said that the people had rebelled...that they had sinned. This was not news to the people of Judah. They were well aware of their sinfulness. It is the “site” of their sin that would surprise many of them. God repeats the identification words for Judah. They are “my people.” They are “the house of Jacob.” God is not denying them, or forsaking them. He is affirming them as being of the chosen, children of Jacob’s family.

But, they are misbehaving and the site of their sin is their worship. God speaks of the reasons He has called them sinners. They are wrong about the way they worship. He says that they seem to be searching for God...even daily. They pray like they expect God to answer. They read the writings of Moses and the prophets and listen to the Synagogue teachers to educate themselves about God. So, what’s wrong with that?

They want to seem to others to be a nation that always does the right thing. They want to appear as loyal God-believers. They know all the right things to say and all the right things to do so that others identify them as God’s chosen people. So, what’s wrong with that?

Also, they did not see themselves as those who had forsaken God. They saw themselves as law keepers, not as law breakers. After all, they were at the Temple very regularly and could quote the law flawlessly. They even prayed that God would bring justice. As we will see later on, they weren’t asking for justice for themselves, they saw themselves as the injured party. They wanted God to judge those who they saw as their enemies and those who made life more difficult for them.

They were even praying for God to come near to them. They wanted to be participants in the glory of God. They wanted others to see them as friends of God.

God quoted some of their prayers: “Why have we fasted (worshipped) and you have not seen it?” Doesn’t that sound just like some of us. We may not do it often, we may not do it right, but we want credit with God

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for all the things that we do. We want to be noticed, and for some of us, we make it sound as if it is a lot of trouble for us to do it. Jesus condemned those who wanted their religious activities noticed, and who most likely did good deeds just for the attention it got them. (Matthew 6:2-5)

God quotes them as asking, “Why have we humbled ourselves and you have not noticed?” This “humbling ourselves” was more than just being good or doing worship well, it referred to several kinds of activities which showed, in a play-acting sort of way, that you were humble. We will see some of these “acts” described by God in the next lesson.

They had played their part, they had put on an Oscar-worthy performance, but God didn’t applaud or give them a curtain call. As a matter of fact, it seemed to them that God had completely ignored them. This was very troubling to the Judeans.

In verse three, God responds to their questions. He said, your worship ends up being a brawl and in-fighting. Wow, what a scene. We can imagine these self-centered people demanding that other self-centered people let them break in line at the altar. They might have demanded a better seat. Remember what James said in chapter two about not showing favoritism? Well, these folks demanded to be favored. God said they “exploited all your workers.” This means that while they were taking the day off, they made their workers continue to work, even if it meant that they couldn’t worship like their bosses. It was all about money.

God said that they even got into fights. We can imagine them sitting through the activities, and then when things were more informal, someone would pick a fight or someone would get their feelings hurt. They would come to blows. Their excuse is obvious and silly. They were very hungry from fasting and very tired from all the religious activity. So they would say, “I’m sorry I hit you, I am just so hungry I’m not responsible.” What a sad thing to be happening to people who supposedly want to please God.

Some think that this could also mean that they were thinking of business rather than thinking of God. They were spending the time that they should have been worshipping God thinking up new ways to make a profit and to be better in business.

Finally, He said, you can’t fast (worship) like that and expect God to honor your worship. What they called worship, God was calling chaos. What they were calling worship, God was calling play-acting. What they were calling worship, God was calling sin.

God said that their behavior in worship didn’t bring them closer to God. Instead it pushed them further and further away from God and made it impossible for God to answer their prayer.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

Page Three

Scripture Memory: “You cannot fast (worship) as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.”

Isaiah 58:4b

Lesson Goal: To guide students to a better understanding of what God calls worship.

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Worship, One—Isaiah 58:1-4

Student Worksheet

Listen during the lesson for this information:

1. What does fasting mean in the Old Testament?
2. What does the phrase, “Shout aloud” mean in Isaiah 58?
3. What was the “site” of Israel’s sin?
4. They did not see themselves as those who had _____ God. They saw themselves as law keepers, not as law _____.
5. This “humbling ourselves” was more than just being _____ or doing _____ well, it referred to several kinds of activities which showed, in a _____ - _____ sort of way, that you were _____.
6. God said they “exploited all your workers.” What does that mean?
7. What was the silly excuse the Hebrews used for getting into fights?
8. What they were calling _____, God was calling _____ - _____. What they were calling _____, God was calling _____.

Page Four

Scripture Memory: “You cannot fast (worship) as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.”
Isaiah 58:4b

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.