



# UNIT 7

## BECOMING WHITE AS SNOW

Isaiah 1:16-20

*Despite the rebellion of ancient Israel, the Lord declared that they could be forgiven and sanctified if they were willing to obey the Lord and learn to do well. Yet the Lord also provided consequences for rejecting his offer and continuing evil. Though Isaiah provided this covenant blessing or curse nearly 2,800 years ago, the choice is also presented to us. We can choose to obey and be sanctified or rebel and suffer the consequences of rebellion.*



## SECTION 1: LET US REASON TOGETHER

*Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.*

~ Jehovah (Daniel 12:10)

**A**s we continue the narrative, Isaiah just finished recording how the Lord despises our most sacred sacrificial rites and ordinances (see Isaiah 1:11-14), not because of the ordinances themselves, but because of how we perform them. Then, he calls for us to put away or remove evil. “Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil” (Isaiah 1:16). The sacrifices and ordinances in our sacred worship centers and temples, and the weekly, monthly, and annual worship rituals are not the evil of which he speaks. It is our manner of worship and the focus of our hearts that is wicked. Now, we must learn what is sacred and righteous worship in the eyes of the Lord. Fortunately, Isaiah gives us guidelines.

### #1—CEASE TO DO EVIL

**T**o the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord once said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin; and have omitted the weightier things of the law; judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23). The Lord also says that he will not hear our prayers because of our sins. “When ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood” (Isaiah 1:15).

If that were the end, the Lord would have just condemned us, but he gives us alternative. He gives us hope that despite what we or our ances-

#### SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- 1 Kings 3:6-12
- 1 Kings 3:16-28
- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Proverbs 12:15
- Proverbs 22:6-9
- Isaiah 1:16-17
- Isaiah 1:23-24
- Isaiah 3:9-15



tors have done, there is a chance to change things.

Isaiah not only tells to stop doing evil, but he actually tells us what to do instead. "Learn to do well," Isaiah says. Isaiah gives insight into what he means by *doing well*. He said, "Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." That's it. A short list of things that we could and should do in order be righteous.

Notice how he uses four actions to perform to do well. Four is a symbolic number of completion or fullness/wholeness, particularly in a worldly or mortal sense relating to the earth. (You may want to go back and review the symbolism of numbers.)

- Isaiah 10:1-2
- 2 Shi-Muel 9:6-8  
[*Mentinah Archives*]
- Ougou 1:69-70 [Mentinah Archives]
- Ougou 1:137 [Mentinah Archives]
- Matthew 25:32-47
- James 1:27

Here we see Isaiah pointing out what goodness means, and he uses symbolically four actions: 1) seek a just verdict, 2) guide and redirect the oppressors to goodness, 3) defend the fatherless, and 4) advocate for the widows. In other words, he is speaking about the accused (or possibly the persecuted), the oppressed (or those oppressing), the fatherless (orphans), and the widows. Isaiah does not mean to serve just these classes of people, but symbolically uses these four categories to call out the poorest and most dejected citizens in our society.

This is was he considers righteousness.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER**

1. What "weightier things" of God's law have we left undone in our society today?
2. What do you think Isaiah means by his words, "Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow?"
3. What specific actions can you take to fulfill the injunction by Isaiah to "do well" today?

**NOTES**

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## #2—COLORFUL SYMBOLISM

It is common in scripture to use color to portray symbolic meaning, and Isaiah uses symbolism to give vivid imagery of the cleansing power of the Lord's atonement. "Come now," Isaiah writes, "and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

This imagery of the purifying and cleansing is a beautiful analogy of the atoning power of Jesus Christ. How fitting this becomes the centerpiece of a large chiasmus found within Isaiah chapter one.

### REDS & WHITES

Red can symbolize several things in scripture, including sin and death, or the evil actions of an individual or group. It is usually characterized by spilling the blood of another. But it can also symbolize the atonement. Think of the blood of the sacrificial animals. It should bring to our mind the drops of precious blood spilled by the Lord as he atoned for us. The imagery of red can have very deep meaning. Remember in Isaiah 1:15, the Lord told us that our hands are full of blood. How intriguing this comes after he describes our ceremonial sacrificial rites. Our unrighteous action and errant worship stains our hands in red.

White can symbolize purity and cleanness. Isaiah shows in this passage (Isaiah 1:18) how our sins—the blood on our hands—can be washed completely clean. We can be made white. That which is stained red can become perfectly clean. לָבָן |lä-vän' is translated as "clean" but can also be translated to *purified*. In other words, we can become sanctified.

### THE CRIMSON WORM

The word used for crimson (תוֹלַעַ |tō-lä') is in reference to the crimson worm, which was used anciently to dye clothes a bright crimson or scarlet color. This was the dye used for the curtains in the tabernacle (see Exodus 26:1) and for the garments the high priest wore (see Exodus 39:2). Notice the symbolism.

It was a fast and sure dye used for many centuries to color clothes red. The dye was very expensive. How amazing the Lord can claim to change the dyed wool back to its pure white color. It shows the power of the atonement to cleanse any sins.

### SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Exodus 39
- Psalms 51:7
- Isaiah 1:18
- Isaiah 63:1-5
- Daniel 12:10
- 1 Nephi 12:10-11
- Alma 5:21
- Alma 13:11-12
- 1 Shi-Muel 6:36-37  
*[Mentinab Archives]*
- Acts 10:9-15
- James 4:7-10
- 1 John 1:6-10
- 1 Pa Natan 5:84-89  
*[Mentinab Archives]*
- Mormon 9:6
- Ether 13:10-11







## #3—FORGIVENESS OF SINS

**I**saiah says, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). This passage from Isaiah is one of the most beautiful and tender promises the Lord offers to his children. What an enormous blessing that though one has sinned their sins can be expunged and cleansed as if they never happened.

The Lord promised he will remember Israel and forgive them, not because we deserve his mercy, but because Jehovah is righteous.

“Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant; I have formed thee; thou art my servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee” (Isaiah 44:21-22). The Lord promised that he would not remember our sins once we have repented.

On the other hand, the choice is ours to repent and return to the Lord or continue on our wayward paths. If we willingly rebel, he will hold us accountable for our actions.

The atonement is available to all people. It is free to access for everyone. But not everyone can use it. Only those who come with a broken heart and contrite spirit can truly access the full power of the atonement.

## SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Psalm 51:15-17
- Isaiah 1:18
- Isaiah 4:1-3
- Isaiah 44:21-22
- Isaiah 48:1-2
- Isaiah 57:15
- Isaiah 66:1-2
- 1 Nephi 20:1-2
- 2 Nephi 9:44-45
- Mosiah 2:28
- Matthew 18:21-22
- Luke 11:52
- 3 Nephi 9:18-20
- Mormon 8:34-41
- Mormon 9:35
- D&C 19:15-19
- D&C 58:42-43







## SECTION 2: CHOOSE LIBERTY OR CAPTIVITY

*They are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil.*

~ *Lehi (2 Nephi 2:27)*

**J**oshua declared to the house of Israel, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Isaiah puts the choice plainly in front of Israel: cease from doing evil and learn to do well (see Isaiah 1:16-17). As such, each choice has a consequence, either providence and protection or destruction and descent (see Isaiah 1:19-20).

### #1—CHOOSE GOOD OR EVIL

**T**he Lord provides all the tools we need to successfully navigate this life and return to him. Yet he allows us the opportunity to choose our own paths. “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which is expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and the power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27). Each choice has a consequence. Either we choose to be obedient and receive blessings, or we choose to be disobedient and suffer the curses. In the end, each of us individually choose our own destiny.

However, as a people and nation, we are also judged collectively by the choices of our society. Though there are some who are obedient, if the majority is wicked, the Lord will still send judgment.

There were righteous individuals who lived in Jerusalem during Hezekiah’s day. Yet because the house of Israel was wicked during his father’s reign, Assyria besieged the city years later. The people still suffered the consequence of their fathers’ and nation’s actions.

Likewise, there were righteous individuals who lived in Jerusalem when it was destroyed by the Babylonians because of their wickedness. You may recognize some of the names. Lehi and his family, Jeremiah, Ezekial, and Uriah.

We cannot expect anything different in our day. Our nation has rejected God and continues to spiral in wickedness. Just as he did for Hezekiah, we hope that he will preserve those who are righteous, or as he did with Sodom, we pray he will remove the righteous before he fulfills his words.

#### SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Genesis 2:9
- Genesis 3
- Moses 4
- Moses 5:10-11
- Deuteronomy 30:15-20
- Joshua 24:14-24
- Isaiah 1:19-20
- Isaiah 1:29-30
- Isaiah 5:20
- Isaiah 56:3-5
- Isaiah 65:11-16
- Isaiah 66:3-4
- 2 Nephi 2
- Helaman 14:30





## #2—COVENANT PROMISES AND CURSES



Isaiah gives two choices, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land, but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 1:19-20). Note how the consequences of our decisions are either 1) physical life and blessings from God or 2) physical death and a curse from God. This is because Isaiah’s words at the beginning of the first chapter link his writings to the Sinai covenant made with Moses and the children of Israel. That covenant was an earthly or physical covenant between God and his people anciently. Though this covenant was made thousands of years ago, it does not dismiss our accountability to this covenant. Later in Isaiah’s writings he speaks of spiritual life and death, salvation versus damnation.

Isaiah wrote a chiasmus (see Isaiah 1:17-20) that highlighted the responsibility of our choices and how each choice produces a covenant promise or a covenant curse with a center focus on receiving forgiveness of sins as we choose obedience and seek to do well.

## SCRIPTURE REVIEW

- Deuteronomy 29:10-29
- Isaiah 10:1-2
- Isaiah 24:1-6
- Isaiah 28:14-18
- Isaiah 33:1-17
- Isaiah 40:28-31
- Isaiah 49:8-12
- Isaiah 55:1-5
- Isaiah 63:7-10
- 1 Nephi 2:19-24
- 2 Nephi 1:20
- Mosiah 2:20-25
- Alma 48:11-17

**A** Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; **cease to do evil;**

**B** **Learn to do well;** seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

**C** Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your **sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;**

**C'** though they be **red like crimson, they shall be as wool.**

**B'** If ye be **willing and obedient,** ye shall eat the good of the land;

**A'** But if ye **refuse and rebel,** ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.







