

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 2, Isaiah 1:1-2:4

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 2, Isaiah 1:1-2:4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Robert Vannoy explores Isaiah 1-2:4, focusing on judgment and blessing. The lecture analyzes Isaiah 1:1-31 and 2:1-4 in depth, relating it to Deuteronomy and the covenant idea, and comparing Isaiah 2:1-5 to its parallel in Micah 4:1-5. Vannoy examines the phrase "in the last days" (aharit hayamim) and its implications for eschatological interpretations. It further investigates amillennial interpretations, particularly that of E.J. Young, and considers how different eschatological viewpoints affect the understanding of the text. Ultimately, the lecture highlights the complexities in interpreting Isaiah's prophecies about future peace and the establishment of God's kingdom.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 2 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Major Prophets.



Vannoy_MP_Session
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3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 2, Isaiah 1:1-2:4

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Robert Vannoy's lecture on Isaiah 1-2:4, focusing on the structure, judgment, blessing, and eschatological implications of the text.

Briefing Document: Robert Vannoy on Isaiah 1-2:4

Main Themes:

- **Covenant Theology:** The lecture emphasizes the importance of the covenant between God and Israel in understanding Isaiah's message.
- **Judgment and Blessing:** Isaiah 1-6 is structured around themes of judgment for Israel's disobedience and promises of future blessing upon repentance.
- **Repentance and Obedience:** The core message revolves around the need for Israel to turn away from sin, repent, and return to obedience to God's covenant.
- **Eschatology ("Last Days"):** The lecture delves into the interpretation of the phrase "in the last days" (aharit hayamim) in Isaiah 2:2 and its implications for different eschatological viewpoints (premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism).

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. Structure of Isaiah 1-6:

- Vannoy identifies a pattern of judgment followed by a brief section of coming blessing within Isaiah 1-6 (1:1-2:5, 2:6-4:6, 5:1-6:13). He intends to focus on the sections of blessing.

1. Isaiah 1:1-2: Indictment and Covenant:

- Isaiah's opening words, "Hear O heavens, listen O earth" (Isaiah 1:2), echo Deuteronomy and covenantal terminology, where the heavens and earth are called as witnesses to Israel's faithfulness.
- "Hear O heavens, listen O earth for the Lord has spoken." "Hear O heavens, listen O earth." What does that remind you of? Where have you seen a previous occurrence of that kind of terminology? It goes back to Deuteronomy where Moses calls as witness the heavens and the earth to hear or see if Israel is going to be faithful to the covenant."

- The use of "rebelled" (Hebrew: *pasha'*) signifies breaking a legal covenant relationship with God.
- The lecture contests the idea that the concept of covenant was a late idea by pointing out that early prophets used covenantal terminology constantly.
- Israel's rebellion is seen as a rejection of a loving Father, countering the notion that the Jewish people had some innate "genius for religion."
- "The heinousness of the ingratitude lies not merely in the fact that the nation rejects God, but that a nation of sons casts aside a loving father. Notice, "I have reared up children." They are sons. God was their father. "They have rebelled against me.""
- The term "know" (*yada'*) is used with covenantal significance, recognizing Yahweh as sovereign and the treaty stipulations as binding.

1. **Isaiah 1:4-18: Sin and Empty Rituals:**

- Isaiah 1 contains an indictment against Israel for their sins and forsaking the Lord.
- "Ah, a 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, turned their backs on him"
- Condemnation of sacrifices is not against ritual *per se*, but against empty rituals performed without a heart devoted to God and obedience to His law.
- "The multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me?' says the Lord... Stop bringing meaningless offerings... Your hands are full of blood." There's the reason: their hands were full of blood. They were living a life completely apart from the law of the Lord and thought, "If we just go through the rituals then everything is going to be alright." But God doesn't want that kind of service, just a ritual performance of some sacrifice. He wants a heart that is devoted to the Lord and that desires to obey the Lord."
- "Learn to do right" is understood as obeying covenant obligations.

1. **Isaiah 1:18-20: Appeal to Reason and Choice:**

- God appeals to Israel to "reason together" (legal terminology), offering forgiveness and cleansing despite their sins.

- "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord... Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."
- Forgiveness is contingent on being "willing and obedient," mirroring the Deuteronomic choice between blessing and curse.
- "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword."

1. **Isaiah 2:1-5: Prophecy of Blessing and Peace:**

- This section describes a future time of peace and righteousness, where nations will stream to the Lord's temple in Jerusalem, and swords will be beaten into plowshares.
- "In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains... Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations... They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."
- It parallels Micah 4:1-5, which adds the image of every man sitting under his own vine and fig tree, unafraid.
- The lecture notes the contrast between the prophecy of destruction in Micah 3 and the prophecy of restoration and peace in Micah 4.

1. **"In the Last Days" (Aharit Hayamim): Eschatological Interpretations**

- The lecture emphasizes that the phrase "in the last days" is not necessarily a technical eschatological term referring only to the end times (eschaton).
- Examples from Genesis and Deuteronomy show the phrase can refer to the general future. Context is key.
- "The context must determine what specific future times are being indicated. You could translate this in a more general way as "in future days," as well as "the last days" giving the idea all the way at the end."
- Different eschatological views (premillennial, postmillennial, amillennial) interpret the phrase and the passage in Isaiah 2 differently.

- E.J. Young (amillennialist) sees "the last days" as the time between Christ's first and second advents, with the prophecy being fulfilled "in principle" during this time.
- Young critiques postmillennialism for not adequately addressing passages that speak of worsening conditions at the end times.
- The lecture points out that taking "in the last days" as a technical term for the period between the advents excludes a premillennial interpretation.

Quotes:

- "I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day, that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess." (Deuteronomy 4:26, cited in lecture)
- "I will teach you to walk in the good and the right way" (1 Samuel 12:23, cited in lecture referencing covenant renewal ceremony).
- "The Hebrews did not face the future as we do. Rather, they face the past and backed into the future, so that the past was before them and the future behind them." (Oswalt, cited in lecture)
- "The phrase belongs strictly to the field of eschatology. It relates to the collective aspect of eschatology, that is both elastic in its extent and moveable as to its position. The New Testament teaches that this period, in the last parts of the days, began to run its course with the first advent of Christ. It is the consummation of the ages, and the end of ages. The last parts will come to a close when the Lord returns in glory." (Vos, cited by Young in lecture)
- "Post-millennial interpretation does not do adequate justice to those passages which emphasize the evil character of the present world, an evil that continues till the end." (Young, cited in lecture)

Implications:

- The interpretation of "in the last days" significantly impacts how the entire passage (Isaiah 2:1-5) is understood and applied within different eschatological frameworks.
- The lecture suggests caution in automatically assuming a technical, end-times meaning for the phrase "in the last days," emphasizing the importance of contextual analysis.
- The lecture provides a foundation for understanding the different viewpoints and challenges in interpreting Isaiah's prophecy of peace and the role of Israel and Jerusalem in the future.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 2, Isaiah 1:1-2:4

Isaiah 1-2:4 Study Guide

I. Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the significance of Isaiah using the phrase "Hear O heavens, listen O earth" in Isaiah 1:2?
2. What does the Hebrew term *pasha'* signify in the context of Isaiah 1?
3. According to Isaiah 1, why does God reject the sacrifices and offerings of the people?
4. What does Isaiah mean when he says, "Learn to do right!"?
5. In Isaiah 1:18, what does it mean to "reason together" with the Lord?
6. What is the central message of Isaiah 2:2-4?
7. How does Micah 4:1-5 parallel Isaiah 2:2-4, and what unique detail does Micah add?
8. What is the literal fulfillment of Micah 3:12?
9. Why is the phrase "in the last days" (aharit hayamim) difficult to interpret, and how does its meaning vary in the Old Testament?
10. How does E.J. Young, an amillennialist, interpret the phrase "in the last days" and how does it influence his understanding of Isaiah 2:2-4?

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. The phrase "Hear O heavens, listen O earth" is reminiscent of Deuteronomy and covenantal terminology. It evokes the idea of the heavens and earth as witnesses to Israel's faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the covenant with God.
2. The Hebrew term *pasha'* signifies breaking a legal relationship. In this context, it refers to Israel's rebellion against God by breaking the covenant they entered into with Him.

3. God rejects the sacrifices and offerings of the people because their hearts are not devoted to Him and they do not obey His laws. Their hands are full of blood, indicating that their actions are not aligned with their rituals.
4. Isaiah means to obey the covenant obligations. "Learn to do right" means to follow the way of the covenant and doing what is good and right in the Lord's sight.
5. To "reason together" is a legal term that means to argue the case. It highlights God's willingness to demonstrate that Israel has turned away from Him and disobeyed the covenant, while also offering forgiveness if they repent.
6. The central message of Isaiah 2:2-4 is a prophecy of a future time of peace and righteousness. It describes a time when the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains, and all nations will stream to it to learn God's ways, resulting in the end of war and the establishment of justice.
7. Micah 4:1-5 is almost identical to Isaiah 2:2-4, prophesying a time of peace when nations will no longer train for war. Micah adds the detail that "Every man will sit under his vine and under his own fig tree and no one shall make them afraid", emphasizing the complete absence of danger and fear.
8. The literal fulfillment of Micah 3:12 is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The city was plowed like a field, became a heap of rubble, and the temple hill became overgrown with thickets.
9. The phrase "in the last days" (aharit hayamim) is difficult to interpret because it is not always used as a technical, eschatological term. Its meaning varies depending on the context, sometimes referring to the general future and other times to the final segment of time or the eschaton.
10. E.J. Young interprets the phrase "in the last days" as a technical term for the period between the first and second advents of Christ. This leads him to believe that Isaiah 2:2-4 is being fulfilled in principle during the church age, but will only be absolutely fulfilled at the second advent when sin is removed.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of covenantal language and imagery in Isaiah 1, particularly in relation to Deuteronomy. How does Isaiah use these elements to convey his message of judgment and the possibility of redemption?
2. Compare and contrast the prophecies in Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-5. What are the key similarities and differences between the two passages, and what do these differences reveal about the unique perspectives of Isaiah and Micah?
3. Explore the different interpretations of the phrase "in the last days" (aharit hayamim) and how these interpretations influence the understanding of Isaiah 2:2-4. How do amillennial, pre-millennial, and post-millennial perspectives differ on the timing and nature of the prophecy's fulfillment?
4. Analyze E.J. Young's amillennial interpretation of Isaiah 2:2-4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of his argument that the prophecy is being fulfilled "in principle" during the church age?
5. How does Isaiah 1:1-2:4 demonstrate the interplay between judgment and blessing in God's relationship with Israel? Discuss the conditions for experiencing God's blessing and the consequences of rejecting His covenant.

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Berit (Covenant):** A binding agreement or treaty between two parties, in this context, between God and Israel. It establishes the terms of their relationship and the obligations of each party.
- **Pasha' (Rebellion):** A Hebrew term that originally belonged to the political sphere, signifying breaking a legal relationship. In Isaiah 1, it refers to Israel's rebellion against God by breaking the covenant.
- **Yada' (Know):** A Hebrew term loaded with covenantal significance, recognizing Yahweh as suzerain and treaty stipulations as binding.
- **Aharit Hayamim (In the Last Days):** A Hebrew phrase that can refer to the general future or, more specifically, to the final segment of time or the eschaton. The context determines its precise meaning.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the end times or the ultimate destiny of humanity and the world.
- **Eschaton:** The final event in the divine plan; the end of the world.
- **Amillennialism:** The belief that there is no literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Instead, the "kingdom passages" in the Bible are interpreted symbolically and applied to the present church age.
- **Premillennialism:** The belief that Christ will return before a literal thousand-year reign on earth.
- **Postmillennialism:** The belief that the spread of the gospel will gradually lead to a period of peace and justice on earth, culminating in Christ's return.
- **Indictment:** A formal accusation or charge brought against someone. In the prophetic context, it is the Lord's charge against Israel for breaking the covenant.
- **Suzerain:** A dominant or superior party in a covenant or treaty relationship. In the context of the Old Testament, God is the suzerain in the covenant with Israel.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 2, Isaiah 1:1-2:4, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Isaiah FAQ

- **What is the main focus of Isaiah 1-6 according to the lecture?**
- The lecture focuses on the sections of coming blessing within Isaiah 1-6, particularly Isaiah 2:1-4, while also addressing the themes of judgment, covenant, and the importance of genuine repentance over mere ritual observance.
- **How does Isaiah 1:2 relate to the concept of covenant?**
- Isaiah 1:2, "Hear O heavens, listen O earth, for the Lord has spoken," echoes Deuteronomy's covenantal language where Moses calls heaven and earth as witnesses to Israel's faithfulness to the covenant. This indicates that Isaiah, like other prophets, was familiar with the covenant idea and its implications, even if he doesn't explicitly use the term "berit" (covenant).
- **What is the significance of Isaiah's condemnation of sacrifices in Isaiah 1?**
- Isaiah's condemnation of sacrifices is not a rejection of ritual itself, but a condemnation of empty ritualism divorced from genuine obedience and a change of heart. God desires a heart devoted to Him, not just a performance of sacrifices while engaging in sinful behavior, like hands "full of blood."
- **What is the meaning of the phrase "learn to do right" in Isaiah 1:17?**
- "Learn to do right" is another way of saying to obey the covenant obligations and to walk in the good and right way of the Lord. It emphasizes the practical outworking of faith in righteous living.
- **What is the central theme of Isaiah 2:2-4 and its parallel in Micah 4:1-5?**
- The central theme is a prophecy of future peace and righteousness. It speaks of a time when the Lord's temple will be established, nations will come to learn God's ways, and there will be an end to war, symbolized by swords being turned into plowshares.

- **What is the significance of the phrase "in the last days" (aharit hayamim) in Isaiah 2:2?**
- The phrase "in the last days" (aharit hayamim) does not automatically refer to the eschaton or end times. Its meaning is context-dependent, and it can also refer to the general future. The interpretation of this phrase significantly impacts how the entire passage is understood.
- **How do different eschatological viewpoints (premillennial, postmillennial, and amillennial) interpret Isaiah 2:2-4?**
- Premillennialists typically see this passage as referring to a literal future millennial kingdom *after* the second coming of Christ. Postmillennialists often view it as being fulfilled through the gradual spread of the gospel *leading up to* a time of peace and justice on Earth. Amillennialists, such as E.J. Young, interpret the "last days" as the period between Christ's first and second advents, with the prophecy being fulfilled "in principle" during this time, awaiting complete fulfillment at the second advent.
- **What are the challenges associated with interpreting Isaiah 2:2-4 from an amillennial perspective according to the lecture?**
- The amillennial interpretation, which sees the prophecy being fulfilled "in principle" between Christ's advents, faces the challenge of explaining where this "absolute change" towards peace and justice is currently visible. Furthermore, it can be difficult to reconcile with scriptural passages that describe the end times as a period of increasing evil and conflict.