# "Come now, let us reason"

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[0:00] Let's turn back then to the chapter we read, the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 1, and we can read again at verse 18.

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.
Come now, let us reason together. Many of us will be familiar with many things in the prophecy of Isaiah, usually referred to as the evangelical prophet, because of so many references throughout the course of his prophecy to the coming of Messiah.
That is, of course, Messiah meaning the anointed one, the Hebrew word, and in the Greek, the New Testament, of course, replaced with the word Christos or Christ.
And so we see in many parts of the prophecy of Isaiah the coming of the suffering servant, especially in the first section, the first 37 chapters of Isaiah prophesies the coming of the suffering servant.
[1:37] But the first chapter doesn't actually really do that. What the first chapter does for us is it sets the scene of what things were like at the time when Isaiah was sent to prophesy.

That is why we see in the very first verse that this is a vision, the vision of Isaiah, a vision of prophecy, the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahas, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.
Now that allows us, of course, to date fairly specifically the times in which Isaiah lived. And we have quite a bit of information on that later on in the course of his own prophecy and in some of the other writings as well.
And the first king mentioned, Josiah, reigned from about 740 BC and then followed by the others, the other three, of course, all direct descendants of the Davidic line, that is, descended from David until Hezekiah who died round about 686 BC.
You remember, of course, that at this time Israel was now divided into two kingdoms, the ten tribes of the north and the two tribes of the south, Judah and Benjamin, although it's usually referred to as Judah.
[3:22] And Jerusalem is still the capital.

Of the four kings who are mentioned there, Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah were all good kings, good in the sense that they encouraged and followed the worship of the Lord.
But Ahas was probably one of the wickedest kings who ruled over Judah and turned completely away.
You can find the details on that in Kings, 2 Kings or 2 Chronicles, chapter 37 particularly and round about there. And even sacrificed his own son in the fire to the Babylonian god or the Canaanite god Moloch.
Hezekiah's son Manasseh would turn away from the worship of God again and would do exactly the same thing. And it is probably Manasseh who was responsible for the death of Isaiah.
[4:53] Although we have absolutely no clear statement of that, it would seem that Isaiah, being the prophet who had brought up Manasseh as a young boy, was cruelly put to death by him along with so many other of the prophets and the people of God, as he attempted to stamp out the worship of the Lord God of Israel.

And it's thought by many commentators that the reference in Hebrews to a prophet being sawn asunder, sawn in half, is a direct reference to the way that Isaiah actually died.
That Manasseh had him tied to a tree and then had the tree sawn in half with Isaiah as well. But again, we only have Jewish tradition for that.

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The Talmud, the expanded version of the Jewish scriptures, puts that as a footnote that that was the case. But whether that's 100% sure or not, we don't know.
But almost certainly Isaiah did die in the slaughter that took place during the time of Manasseh. And you will remember that scripture tells us that he made the streets of Jerusalem run with innocent blood.
[6:13] And so the picture that we have of the time in which Isaiah is doing most of his prophecy is almost certainly during the time of Ahaz.

We can't date the first chapter exactly in which of the reign of the four kings, but it would seem from its content that it refers particularly to what was going on in the time of Ahaz.
Although Isaiah and Jotham and later Hezekiah had reinvigorated and reintroduced the worship of the God of Israel, Scripture tells us time and time again that the high places were not taken away, the places where the people actually sacrificed.
And it tells us also even in this chapter in verse 30, it refers to the oaks. You shall be like an oak whose leaf withers in a garden without water. The reference to the oaks were to the idols that they themselves raised up round about their own homes.
The carvings out of oak trees of Canaanite gods. And the great problem that we have at this time then is that the worship of the Lord appears to be superficial in the reign of Isaiah and Jotham and then virtually disappears almost completely in the reign of Ahaz.
[7:46] Although Hezekiah restores, carries out considerable restoration. And so the Lord sends, the Lord God sends this vision of what has happened and this prophecy of how Judah has despised the worship of the Lord God.

And that is what he refers to at the beginning in verse 2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. There was no nation that had known the blessing of the Lord and the covenant of the Lord like the people of Israel. And particularly, of course, the people of Judah where the temple was in the holy city.
But you will see that time and time again in the course of this chapter, Isaiah tells the people that what they are doing is simply head worship and not heart worship.
And we see this in verse 4. Sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly.
[9:12] They have forsaken the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel. They are utterly estranged. And again, you see in verse 11 and 12 the same thing.

And so we see that it comes to a culmination in verse 15.
People going through the rituals of the Mosaic Law.
But as we are told throughout the course of the chapter, their behavior and their worship is not correct. They are still in their hearts worshiping idols.
And this, of course, comes to a peak under the reign of Ahaz. It's quite interesting, isn't it, to draw the parallel between the state of Jerusalem, the state of Judah at that time, and the state of our own country nowadays.
[10:46] If we go back 100 years, 50 years ago, when Britain was a Christian country. Or was called a Christian country.

Certainly perhaps much more Christian than it is now. I was listening to someone the other day speaking about the state of Britain nowadays, and insisting that Britain should not be called a secular country, but should actually now be referred to as a pagan country.
That's a sad state of affairs for a country that evangelized many, many parts of the world. How times have changed, how things have changed.
And yet you and I have to examine our own hearts when we come to look at this as well. And think even in terms of how you and I stand up for the principles of God's word.
And how you and I come to worship. Do we actually come to worship as a ritual? Are we here this morning simply because Sunday morning is the time we come to church?
[11:59] It's an appearance, an outward appearance. It's head worship, but it's not heart worship. Each one of us has to examine ourselves in our worship to see whether our worship is really genuine worship.

And so given all these things, the Lord then speaks through Isaiah in verse 18 and says, Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

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Even although your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. It's interesting, isn't it, the two colours that are chosen to represent sin.
Scarlet and crimson. You might think quite often that you would refer to sin as blackness. That's how it's referred to usually in the Song of Solomon and other parts of scripture.
But here we see it as redness. Though your sins are like scarlet. Red like crimson. And probably the reason for that was, you remember under the Mosaic law on the Day of Atonement, that a scapegoat was sent, was set loose.
[13:28] One was offered, one was set loose. And was sent into the desert, into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the people. And rabbinical tradition says that what they did was that they tied a red ribbon round the scapegoat's horn.

And if the sacrifice was acceptable to God, then the ribbon would turn white. Now that may well just be a legend.
But every housewife, every lady who does the washing at home knows that if you put a red sock in with your whities, especially your white underwear, you will have lovely shades of pink at the end of it.
And I'm sure it's happened to all of us time and time again. Why was that? Why was that? Well, the red that they used as a dye then came from the shell of the cochineal beetle.
And was the most, or the strongest colour that anything could be actually dyed. And almost very difficult to remove.
[14:49] And of course, the dyeing of red, anything that's red is still based on the same thing. But there is, of course, another reason behind that as well. The redness, of course, refers, when we think of redness, we refer very often, and our thoughts go to the redness of the blood.

Though your sins are like scarlet, though they are red like crimson, there was one who would come. And here we see, of course, the reference to the suffering saviour who would come.
And who would die on the cross at Calvary. And the redness of whose blood would wash away our sins and make our sins white like snow.
Now, of course, that is a figurative term. Sin itself has no colour, at least that you and I can see. Perhaps the Lord sees differently.
But this is probably an image that is used to represent how glaring sin is in its offensiveness to God.
[16:09] You see, we don't often think of that. One of the things that we don't often think of with our Lord Jesus Christ is that one of the most difficult things that he must have had to do.

We always tend to focus on the cross and various other things. But imagine a holy God, because that's what the Lord Jesus Christ was.
Born without sin. And yet living for 33 years in a world contaminated by and surrounded by sin. Seeing it every single day. Experiencing it in his mother. In the behaviour of his family. In the behaviour of people round about.
In the behaviour of Jesus Christ. And you remember as he stood at the grave of Lazarus. At the tomb of Lazarus. That Jesus wept.
[17:10] So many people seem to think that Jesus was weeping because of the death of Lazarus. Not so. He knew fine well that he would resurrect Lazarus.

In the next 10 minutes or so. But what he was weeping for was the effect that sin had had on the world. And principally how it had brought death into the world.
And so you and I are given an invitation here. Along with the people of Judah. An invitation from the Lord himself. Come now.
Let us reason together. Says the Lord. God. And you notice that it is the Lord himself. Who is speaking. God is inviting you.
To come and reason with him. That leads us to a very interesting question. How do you reason with God?
[18:16] How do you reason with God? Well. Perhaps we can think of it this way.

I am sure that many of us have in our school days or studies or whatever. Spent time having to reason out things like the works of Socrates or Plato.
Or any other kind of philosophy that we have looked at. And possibly many of the things that we have reasoned out. Have to do with science and mathematics and various other things as well.

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And so we employ our intelligence and we reason out these things. But when we look particularly at philosophers.
It's a very interesting thing that the majority of philosophers that we study are all dead. The only way that we can reason with them and argue with them is of course by reading the works that they have written.
[19:18] I don't know how many of you have studied the logic of Plato for example. But when you come to a point in Platonic logic.

And you are arguing about the existence of a chair. You and I can look at a chair.
How do I know that what you see as a chair is exactly what I see as a chair? For all I know you might call it a chair.
But you might see something completely different. How do I know that the colour that you and I see as red in those chairs. Or scarlet. Is actually the same to all of us.
For all I know you might be seeing it blue. But to you blue is red. And so you always call blue red and therefore we are in agreement.
[20:21] But you see totally differently to what I see. Now I don't know if you can follow that kind of logical reasoning without getting totally confused.

I remember struggling at university with it. And getting very confused sometimes by some of the things involved in it. But I had no possibility of going to the author and say explain this to me.
I don't understand explain it to me. Because of course the author was long gone. And even when we come on to more modern philosophical stuff.
Like the works of Nietzsche and various others. Then again we were dealing with dead authors. In a similar way when you and I come to reason with God.
What do we have as a basis of our reasoning? Well of course we have the written book of God. In the same way as we have the books of philosophers or others or whatever.
[21:29] We have the works of God written down in scripture for us. And so you and I in the same way can read the written account that is left to us.

And then we can reason it out. Now notice of course that what you and I should be doing is reasoning with God.
Not reasoning about God. That's a different thing altogether. That brings us into the arguments of course of whether God exists or he doesn't exist.
That brings us into atheism and the conflict with agnosticism and atheism. Secularism and paganism and all the other isms that you want to lump together. And that then becomes an intellectual exercise.
I cannot prove to you that God exists. And you cannot prove to me that God doesn't exist. I can tell you what he's done in my life.
[22:42] I can give you the evidence that I have for his existence. But I can't actually bring it out of my pocket and say look here's God.

I cannot give you any concrete evidence that God exists. Because basically of course our belief in God is exactly that.
It's a belief. But it's a belief that has something behind it. It has a faith behind it.
And it has something else. It has of course the presence and the working of the Holy Spirit. And that puts it in a totally different dimension to dealing with any other human order.
Come now let us reason together. So if we want to reason about God. First of all we have to become familiar with his word.
[23:46] With the scriptures that have been left for us. That tell us who God is. That tell us about God. And that tell us what God has done.

And also make clear to us why he has done it. I wonder how many of us approach our faith from that point of view.
That we can actually reason out clearly. What is revealed in scripture about God. And why we find the information given to us about God to be believable.
Many people will say of God. Well that's just because of your faith. Is it? If you logically follow through the scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament.
First of all you cannot disagree. That they are historically accurate. I'm not going to argue about every single little detail.

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[25:04] But historical records will tell us. That scripture coincides. Virtually 100%. With what is written.

In the books of the Jewish scriptures. In the Old Testament. And the books of the New Testament. So far.
Archaeology. Historical data. Has not contradicted. Anything. That is in scripture. And personally.
I don't believe it ever will. But that's another argument. We could reason about that. For a considerable period of time. And I know that some of you will say. Oh well.
But there are things I would like to reason with God about. Like what? Would you like to reason with God about the first chapters of Genesis.
[26:01] And Adam and Eve. And creation. And get into the whole creation or science debate. That's very interesting to do.

And there are many fascinating arguments involved in that. And you will find that the deeper you explore in science. That there is nothing in science or scientific theory.
That actually disagrees with biblical evidence. Quite the opposite. Quite the opposite. There are so many people nowadays.
Who think that science has disproved the Bible. Quite the opposite. Science confirms the Bible. And again. I don't have time to go into great detail on that.
That would take us hours and hours of debate. To go through everything that's involved. For example. From even the study of quantum physics. Right through to a simple mathematical law.
[27:05] Of the number of angles. In a triangle. Adding up to 180 degrees. Why is it a law? Well think about that.

Why is it that no matter what shape. Or size. You draw the triangle. The angles will always add up. To 180 degrees. Of course people will say.
Well it's a law. Isn't it? Yeah. But did these laws come into being by accident? Or by design? And so you come into a whole range of arguments.
That are fascinating to go down. And again. I don't have time to go through them all here just now. But come now. Let us reason together. Says the Lord.
Alright. What else would you like to reason about? Can you reason out by human logic. That God exists? Can you reason out by looking at the world round about you?
[28:08] By looking at the beauty of creation. By looking at the natural laws of mathematics and science. And quantum physics and astrophysics. And various other things. Can you reason out by that.

That God exists? Well some people have. Others of you of course have used these things to reject. The idea of God. But there's a simple question that causes. These people all kinds of difficulty. Perhaps it's caused you difficulty as well. How can you bring order out of chaos?
If the world simply came into being. Through the chaotic happenings. Of the big bang etc. And so on. How did order then come into it?
[29:10] Order and the number of laws. That exist in science and mathematics. And so on. That's a very interesting thing. To reason about.

But we still have a problem. That doesn't in itself. Prove for us. That God exists. Perhaps it should. It should prove for us. Of the greatness of God. It should prove for us. The glory of the creator. But you and I.
You see. Being intellectual human beings. We need something more than that. So how do you reason with God?
It's interesting isn't it. That though you are surrounded. As the letter to the Hebrews says. You are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. That the witness of other people.
[30:10] Is not enough to convince you. And let's put that in a very simple context. I have never been to Australia. I've been to lots of places.

But I've never been to Australia. I have no real evidence. To believe. That Australia exists.
Except. What I've seen on television. Films and so on. Which again of course. Could be invented. Could be fictional. Except the evidence of people.
People who have been there. People I know. Who have been there. And visited. And said. Australia is like this and that. Etc. Etc. So it really exists. Yes it does. Because I've been there. So I have a choice.

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Either I can accept. Their evidence. Or I go and see for myself. Unfortunately. I don't have the desire.
[31:14] Or the funds. To travel to Australia. To find out. If it's really there or not. And to be honest. I don't really care. But there is something. Much more important.

When we come to looking. At the evidence of others. Regarding God. When you ask others.
Who have strong faith. Who have a belief in God. Who say that they are Christians. And you ask them. Why? Why? What do they tell you?
Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? They tell you. I hope they tell you. That they have come to realise.
That their sins were like scarlet. And that they became white as snow. Through the application of the blood. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the atonement that was rendered.
[32:09] At the cross and calemary. And that the whole pattern of scripture. From the Old Testament. To the end of the New Testament. shows that to be coming and to be fulfilled.

And we see that even in this chapter of what is to come because the figure that is used in verse 21, how the faithful city has become a whore, is a figure that is used throughout the Old Testament of Israel committing adultery with false gods.
How often in Scripture are the people of God, the Church of God, described as the bride of Christ. That's what the Song of Solomon is all about. That's what John sees in Revelation 21 when he sees the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven adorned as a bride for her husband.
The evidence that each individual believer can give you is personal to that believer. But you, of course, can look at that believer and you can judge by comparing that believer's behaviour with what it was before he or she was converted to what it is now.
[33:40] Or something has changed. That doesn't mean, of course, that the believer is perfect. We sin daily in thought, word and deed. We will make mistakes all the time.

But I can show you and I can reason with you that what I am now is completely different to what I was 20, 30 years ago. Why?
By the grace of God. That's the way Paul puts it in Ephesians 2. It is by the grace of God. Not of yourselves, but by the grace of God.
And it's only when you get this conviction that your sins are like scarlet. You see, the problem is that nowadays you talk to people about sin and they become offended.
You refer to people as sinners and they threaten to take you to court and sue you for libel. It's become a term now that is no longer acceptable to use in our secular, tolerant society.
[34:47] It's amazing how tolerant we are of everything except Christianity. And the words of Scripture. Why? Because they accuse us.

They go to our conscience. And it's only when they go to our conscience in depth and we become convinced that our sins are like scarlet that any real change will come.
Have you been through that process? Do you see yourself before a holy God as a sinner whose sins are like scarlet?
You see, once you become a believer it is then that you realise just how scarlet your sins are.
And the more you go on in your Christian experience the more aware you become of your sinful nature. things that never bothered you as a young Christian and I mean young in faith not necessarily in age things that never bothered you as a young Christian begin to bother you as a mature Christian especially when you look back and also how often Satan rubs it into you who are you to call yourself a Christian?
[36:25] Who do you think you are? You're not good enough. How often have we heard that in our conscience? You're not good enough. You're not good enough to be at the Lord's table.

It's because we're not good enough that we come to the Lord's table. There is no other reason for us to come except that we're not good enough.
It's because we're not good enough that we come to reason with the Lord. And how do we do that? Oh, we do it in prayer. We do it in meditation on His Word.
We do it by studying His Word. That's how we reason with the Lord. And we see more and more what we really are in the Lord's eyes.
How a holy God perceives us. But yet we can come to a promise like this that though our sins are like scarlet they shall be white as snow nor they are red like crimson they shall become like wool.

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[37:41] Isn't that a wonderful promise that Isaiah in his vision was able to write down for us to lay hold on that no matter what our sins are like that there is a way to be forgiven for our sins and to become as white as snow.

You remember the imagery of the rightness. We think often of how often the imagery of whiteness is used throughout Scripture.
White as snow they shall become like wool. It's a very interesting verse this. White as snow. I remember one of my friends once who was a Wycliffe Bible translator saying to me that was the most difficult verse we ever had to translate in the Amazon jungle.
Why? They'd never seen snow in their life. There was no word in the majority of the languages for snow. So they had to translate it as something else.
Something local that was white. For as he said when I was working with the Eskimos the Inuits he said the problem was they had 27 words for snow because their lives depended on the different states of snow in which they moved.
[39:06] Which word do you want to use? But you see it's the concept that matters. They shall be white as snow. It's not the whiteness we see reflected in the angels at the tomb.

It's the whiteness that we see in the fine linen of the sins. And it is symbolic of the holiness that is to come. That the sinner has a way to become holy.
That's as I said to the young people what sanctification is all about. It's a process that goes on throughout your life as a believer but will never be completed until you come into glory.
come now. You notice the instruction. It's not come tomorrow. Come next week. Come in years. It's come now.
You might not hear the invitation again. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your word this morning.
[40:15] We thank you for the vision that I say had. We thank you that we can come and reason together with you and that you can make yourself known to us through the reasoning of your word and the truth that it contains.

Bless us now as we conclude our morning morning. Make your word dedications to any who have not yet come to us saving knowledge of you and pardon our sins through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Let us conclude then by singing the final verses of Psalm 51 David's great psalm of confession of his sin from verse 15 down to the end on page 282 My closed lips O Lord by thee let them be opened and shall the praises by my mouth abroad be published for thou desirest not sacrifice else would I give thee nor wilt thou with want offering at all delighted be.
A broken spirit there's the key thing a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice a broken and a contrite heart Lord thou wilt not despise and so on down to the end of the psalm verse 15 my closed lips all on my closed lips oor lord by thee that them are made■ and how can de Auft' later happen so on The holy God we live For though we like the country I
Else would I give it thee Nor will thou whisper To the kingdom of divine me A broken spirit is to God A pleasing sacrifice A broken land A calm desert Lord, thou wilt not despise To time as thunder, good Lord
[43:28] To sigh on thine own hill The walls of thy Jerusalem The land will love Of thy good will The righteous offnings Shall we please And all in the world This day With over-dothed And with God Shall on thine altar Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ

The love of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Now and forever Amen

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