

Isaiah: The King of Law and Gospel

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The importance of God's Word was rediscovered in the sixteenth century during a period we call the Reformation. Martin Luther said that the Word had two components: the law and the gospel and it was crucial to make a distinction between them.

"The wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." Romans 6:23

"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 as red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Isaiah 1:18

The law is a statement of reality. The gospel is an invitation to a new reality.

More simply put, there is good news and bad news in issues of faith in God. The bad news is the human race has absolutely destroyed their relation with God through rebellion and sin and they cannot do a thing about it. The good news ("gospel" means good news) is Jesus Christ, both God and man, has come and died upon a cross to reconcile God and people. To bring people to faith and a saving/justifying relationship with God, both the law and gospel need to be at work.

Isaiah is the king of law and gospel. He sees the law most clearly and what it has done to humanity. He also sees the gospel so well. Early reformers of the 16th century said, *"The two chief works of God in human beings, to terrify and to justify the terrified or to make them alive. The entire Scripture is divided into these two works. One part is the law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sin. The second part is the gospel, that is, the promise of grace given in Christ."* Book of Concord

"Anything that proclaims something about our sin and God's wrath is the proclamation of the law, however and whenever it may take place." Formula of Concord — p. 283

THE LAW

"As tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so that their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust for they have rejected the law of the Almighty."

Isaiah 5:24

"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. We all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sin" Isaiah 64:6-7

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us have turned to our own way." Isaiah 53:6

THE GOSPEL

"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace... We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:5-6

"Your Maker is your husband...For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back' In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment but with everlasting kindness, I will have compassion on you." Isaiah 54:5-8

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah stresses the law and human failure. The last 27 chapters deal primarily with the Gospel. It is painful trying to make it through Isaiah 1-39 — but we need to go through it with our failures and sins so that we may be guided to Christ.