

## July 12 Answers

- 1) Isaiah prophesied to the southern kingdom of **Judah**. Judah had been prospering under the rule of **Uzziah**, a man who followed God faithfully for most of his 52-year reign. But just like Israel, the people of Judah had forsaken God. In grief and anger, God called the heavens and the earth to hear: “I reared children and brought them up, but they have **rebelled** against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand. Ah, 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 and turned their backs on him” (Isa 1:2b–4 NIV). The people were probably **shocked** by Isaiah’s words. After all, they were faithful to offer sacrifices and offerings. They attended the feasts and spread out their hands before God in prayer. God’s response? “I am **sick** of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle. Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts; the incense of your offerings **disgusts** me! I hate your new moon celebrations and your annual festivals. They are a burden to me. I cannot stand them!” (Isa 1:11–14 NLT). What then did God want from Judah? “**Wash** yourselves and be clean! Get your sins out of my sight. Give up your evil ways. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of **orphans**. Fight for the rights of **widows**” (Isa 1:16–17 NLT). Judah embraced the **rituals** of worship, but they rejected the heart of the covenant. Like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day, they gave a tithe of even the smallest garden herbs, but they neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faith. As Jesus said, “You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former” (Matt 23:23 NIV). We should take heed, because the tendency to substitute religious **piety** for loving obedience is as prevalent today as it was in Isaiah’s time. What should Judah do? Was it too late? Not at all! “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. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword” (Isa 1:18–20).