

Read Isaiah 1:2-20

What are your initial impressions of this passage?

In v10-15 God confronts his people over their empty religiosity. They have all the right outward acts of worship, but these acts have become nothing more than empty religious rituals because the peoples' hearts are far from God. What acts of worship today can we do that may be good in themselves but can easily become empty, hollow and meaningless when our hearts are not engaged?

Based on this passage, what is God's attitude toward our worship when it becomes heartless?

What can we do to prevent our worship from become empty religion (don't point the finger at other people, the 'church' or worship team...think about your own heart)?

V11 is a pronouncement of guilt upon Israel for turning away from God. This applies as much to people in our day as in Isaiah's. Why do we struggle so much with the concept of personal guilt in modern culture?

Why is it important to recognise our objective guilt before God?

Read v18—why is this verse so striking in the context of this chapter.

God responds to the guilt of his people with a word of unconditional grace. How is this promise of grace ultimately fulfilled?

Jesus deals with our objective guilt before God, but many Christians still live with a subjective feeling of guilt. Is this something you experience? Why or why not?

If you live with a lingering sense of guilt as a Christian, what should you do? How can the following Scriptures help: Psalm 103:11-12; Romans 8:1?

In what other ways can we internalise God's gift of free grace in place of our guilt?