

The Sinful Nation.

DECEMBER 6. B. C. 738. ISAIAH i: 1-18.
Golden Text, Isaiah i: 16, 17.

ISAIAH stands out prominently as the preacher, historian, psalmist, and especially as the prophet of his day, who foretold more plainly than any other the coming of the Messiah—His birth, ch. 7: 14; His Davidic descent, 11: 1, 2; His sufferings, ch. 53. Hence so frequently quoted in the N. T., Luke 4: 17, 18; Acts 8: 27, 28; Rom. 9: 27, &c. V. 1. Isaiah's ministry covered a period of 60 years. Tradition states that he was sawn asunder when he was 90 years old. This first chapter describes the low condition of the Jewish nation, and traces all their calamities to their apostasy from God. *Judah*—the kingdom of the two tribes; Judah and Benjamin. V. 2. *Hear, O heavens*—Compare Deut. 32: 1. His words suit all times and every nationality. *Rebelle*d—This unnatural sin charged against the chosen people, applies equally to all who reject His covenant mercies. V. 3. Even the unthinking brutes may teach us a lesson of gratitude and affection. *Doth not consider*—Much of the sin in the world is due to want of reflection, 1 Sam. 12: 24. V. 4. *Sinful nation*—How different it should have been! Ex. 19: 6. *Backwards*—Away from God and towards idolatry. Vs. 5, 6. *The whole head*—every part of the nation suffering the consequences of its sin—Judah and Israel alike smarting under the wounds judicially inflicted. Vs. 7, 8. *Desolate*—Repeated invasion of their enemies had entirely changed the aspect of the country; nothing left to remind them of the glory of Solomon excepting Jerusalem, and that in a state of siege! V. 10. *Rulers of Sodom*—rulers of Jerusalem as wicked as they were. V. 11. *To what purpose?* It is useless for unbelievers to go through a round of formal observances. Mark 7: 6. V. 12. *To tread My courts*—mere going to church will not save us from our sins, John 4: 21-24. *New moons*—feasts held at stated seasons, Num. 10: 10; 28: 11. V. 15. Formal prayers and offerings can never atone for crime. V. 16. True repentance consists in turning from sin to serve God. *Learn to do well*—It is not enough that we cease from flagrant sins, we must endeavour to do all the good we can. *Seek judgment*—do justly by all men. *Judge*—defend those who need protection. *The widow*—and all others who are deprived of their natural guardians—orphans, the poor, the destitute, &c., James 1, 27; 2: 15, 16. V. 18. Amazing condescension! that God should stoop to argue the case with sinners, teaching us that His service is no more than should be expected from rational creatures. It approves itself to candid judgment, 2 Cor. 5: 14. *Scarlet*—so deeply ingrained that nothing but the grace of God can efface it. *Wool*—the washed fleece before it is dyed. The blood of Christ alone can take away sin, 1 John 1: 7.

The Suffering Saviour.

DECEMBER 13. B. C. 712. ISAIAH liii: 1-12.
Golden Text, Isaiah 53: 6.

THIS is one of the most wonderful chapters in the Bible. The two great things which the O. T. prophets testified beforehand, were the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, 1 Peter 1: 11. Nowhere are these two so plainly and fully predicted as here. It reads more like history than a prophecy uttered 700 years before the advent of the Messiah. V. 1. *Who hath believed?*—The unbelief of the Jews is expressly said to be a fulfilment of this prophecy, John 12: 37, 38; Rom. 10: 16. Vs. 2, 3. *Root out of a dry ground*—Referring to our Saviour's humble parentage. *Shall grow up*—in obscurity; scarcely anything was heard of Jesus till he was 30 years of age. *No beauty*—no external glory such as the Jews expected, therefore they despised and rejected him. *Man of sorrows*—He endured hunger, thirst, poverty, and acutest mental agony caused by the scorn of man and the hidings of His Father's countenance. He was never seen to laugh, though He often wept. Vs. 4, 5. *Surely*—Even the Jews, ancient and modern, admit that this chapter refers to the Messiah. *Borne, carried*—By his vicarious sufferings did away with sin, the source of grief and sorrow. *Esteem Him stricken*—as if it were for His sins, and not ours! V. 6. *All we*—the whole human race, corrupted by sin, has left its rightful owner. *Turned aside*—from God's way to our own way. *Laid on Him*—As the sins of the offerer were transferred to the sacrifice, and those of all Israel laid on the scapegoat, Lev. 16: 21, so our sins are made to meet upon Him—the sins of all He was to save from every age and place. Nor was He unwilling to bear the load. His was a voluntary sacrifice, John 10: 18, and for all, John 3: 16; 1 John 1: 7. V. 7. *Oppressed*—The penalty was strictly exacted, Deut. 15: 2. *As a lamb*—John 1: 29. So far from offering resistance, He rebuked those who would have rescued Him, Matt. 26: 51-52. *Dumb*—Matt. 27: 12. V. 8. *From prison*—rather from justice, for Christ was never imprisoned, though he was bound and scourged, John 18: 12; 19: 1. V. 9 contains a distinct reference to his humiliating death, and to his burial in a rich man's tomb, John 19: 13, 38. V. 10. *It pleased the Lord*—His sufferings were endured that he might do Jehovah's will, John 6: 38. *To bruise him*—Gen. 3: 15. *Put him to grief*—fulfilled in Gethsemane. *When Thou shalt make*—rather when *He*—He gave Himself, Matt. 20: 28. *His seed*—His spiritual children. V. 11. *Satisfied*—The blessed results of His sufferings shall amply compensate for them, Rev. 7: 9-12. V. 12. Christ attains His glory by conquest, therefore He has the right to divide the spoil in accordance with the Hebrew idea of triumph, Ps. 68: 18; Eph. 4: 8.