

20.03.2021 DESIRE OF NATIONS

The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Isaiah 60:3

As we near the end of our study of the book of Isaiah, it would be good to remind ourselves of what it has taught us.

Isaiah chapters 1-39 tell us of God's government, that He is a holy righteous and just God. Chapters 40-66 tell us of the grace of God – His comfort, compassion, salvation and glory.

Some commentators describe this second part of Isaiah thus: Redemption promised, Redemption provided and Redemption realised. The Servant of chapters 49-58 becomes the Anointed One of chapters 59-66.

This week we begin the last section of Isaiah beginning with chapter 59.

The Effects of Sin: Isaiah 59:1-15

Isaiah 59:1-8 describes the sins of Israel that will lead to the Babylonian captivity. It is also relevant in every age since man lives in a sinful world.

This passage tells us that sin alienates us from God and leaves individuals and society devoid of truth, justice and righteousness. God is not responsible for this alienation; we are – our sins have separated us from Him and led to alienation (He has turned His face away).

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. Isaiah 59:1, 2

God is mighty to save and not insensitive to us, but we have separated ourselves from Him by our sins.

For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue has muttered perversity. 59:3

Sin has a pervasive, corrupting influence throughout society... *'No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity.'* 59:4

Their hands, feet and thoughts (minds) have become instruments of unrighteousness... *'Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity.'* 59:6, 7

Isaiah then describes the **consequences** of sin...no justice, no peace, no light, no salvation, no hope...

They have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace. Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness... We look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. 59:8-11

Isaiah 59:12-15 describes the recognition and confession of sin and transgression. Isaiah confesses on behalf of his people. Some have repented as is obvious from the pronoun 'We'.

For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them: in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. 59:12, 13

They acknowledge that their sins have made their society devoid of truth, justice and righteousness.

Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. 59:14
Who Forgives? Who is Forgiven? Isaiah 59:15-21

Since His people are unable to live up to the standards of righteousness He has set (56:1; 59:14), since those who would live by the truth and shun evil are faced with hostility (59:15) and the absence of any human help (59:16), the **Lord clothes Himself for the tasks of salvation and vengeance** (59:16–17).

Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. 59:15-17

At that time there was no-one to stand up for Israel ... *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth; and I will pardon it.* Jeremiah 5:1

In every age, no-one can stand before God and plead for himself or for others, for he has no righteousness of his own to present to God...*there is none righteous, no not one* (Romans 3:10)...*every mouth is shut and the whole world stands guilty before God* (Romans 3:19).

So Christ comes as the Anointed Redeemer and Warrior to redeem (deliver) His people and to take vengeance against His enemies.

To all mankind, He provides forgiveness for their sins and the righteousness of God for their salvation.

Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, "The Lord has utterly separated me from His people"; Nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree." For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off. "Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, And to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants— Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant— Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, "Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him." Isaiah 56:3-8

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3:21-26

He will protect them from their enemies.

So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. 59:19

He will come as the Redeemer to Jerusalem (Zion) and to those in Jerusalem who repent of their transgression.

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," says the Lord. 59:20

He will come as the Provider of the New Covenant promises.

"As for Me," says the Lord, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the Lord, "from this time and forevermore." 59:21

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). God requires that we confess our sins, and humble our hearts before Him; but at the same time we should have confidence in Him as a tender Father, who will not forsake those who put their trust in Him. Many of us walk by sight, and not by faith. We believe the things that are seen, but do not appreciate the precious promises given us in God's Word; and yet we cannot dishonor God more decidedly than by showing that we distrust what He says, and question whether the Lord is in earnest with us or is deceiving us. God does not give us up because of our sins. We may make mistakes, and grieve His Spirit; but when we repent, and come to Him with contrite hearts, He will not turn us away.' *Selected Messages Vol. 1 p 350*

Universal Appeal: Isaiah 60

Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising...and they shall call you The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah 60:1-3, 14

This passage refers to Zion and to God's people. It has an important message for us today. God's people who accept the work of the Redeemer of Zion in their lives will be transformed. This transformation will result in light and glory which will attract the peoples of the earth, Gentiles and unbelievers.

We have no light of our own. It is the light of the glory of God risen upon us that will attract men and women to Christ.

Today we live in the time of the sounding of the seventh angel (Revelation 10:7). By faith, God's people live on Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 11:1, 2; 14:1). Living in the presence of the Lamb, we are being transformed into His image.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18

The word 'transformed' here is the same word that describes Christ's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

God wants to transform us into the very image of His Son, Christ Jesus. In doing this, He will reveal His glory in us. This is the reason He has raised up a people for the last days – a people who through the Spirit will fill the earth with the glory of God and be a witness to the entire world. Then the whole earth will be lightened by the glory of God (Revelation 18:1, Matthew 24:14).

'In the visions of the prophets of old the Lord of glory was represented as bestowing special light upon His church in the days of darkness and unbelief preceding His second coming. As the Sun of Righteousness, He was to arise upon His church, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. And from every true disciple was to be diffused an influence for life, courage, helpfulness, and true healing. The coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth's history... but out of that night of darkness God's light will shine... in the night of spiritual darkness, God's word goes forth, "Let there be light." To His people He says, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "Behold," says the Scripture, "the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee" Isaiah 60:1, 2. Christ, the outshining of the Father's glory, came to the world as its light... This was the work He commissioned His disciples to do. "Ye are the light of the world," He said. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:14, 16.' *Prophets and Kings p 717, 718*

*"The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself. For the Lord will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. **Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.** Isaiah 60:19-21*

The Year of the Lord's Favour: Isaiah 61

And He (Christ) was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (the year of the Lord’s favour).” Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. Luke 4:17-20

In this passage we find the Messiah Himself speaking of His mission. It reminds us of what was promised in Isaiah 59 – Messiah will redeem His people and take vengeance upon their enemies.

Isaiah 61:1-3: God the Father has anointed His Son to transform His people...*“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (the year of the Lord’s favour)... to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”*

Though Messiah is the Anointed One, all three persons of the Godhead are involved in His mission...The Lord has anointed Him and the Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him.

‘...to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...’ is a specific reference to the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) when all the captives and debtors were released. It pointed to the Day of salvation when Messiah would come to set His creation free from the bondage of sin and the consequences of sin.

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:17

Our mission as God’s people is the same as that of Christ; we are tell the world of a Saviour who has come not to condemn but to save and we are to share in His mission of mercy.

“As the Father has sent me, so send I you”...and He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” John 20:21

The Day of the Lord’s Vengeance

*“To proclaim... **the day of vengeance of our God.**” Isaiah 61:2*

When Jesus read Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth, He stopped short of reading this sentence. The reason was simple; at His first coming He came to pronounce the day of the Lord’s favour, the Day of salvation and to provide deliverance from Satan, sin and death.

Today, we still live in the day of the Lord’s favour.

The Second Coming however will be the day of the Lord’s vengeance...the great and terrible Day of the Lord (Joel 3:21, Malachi 4:5, Zephaniah 1:7).

Before that Day, God will examine the lives of every man and woman. The question He will ask is *“What have you done with My Son?”*

Those who have refused the gift of salvation found only in Christ Jesus will be the enemies of God. **By their own choice, they have condemned themselves to eternal death.**

it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be

glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:28, 29

Conclusion:

Today, in the time of the Lord's favour, may we all choose the salvation found in Christ Jesus and rejoice in the robe of His righteousness without which no one can enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. Isaiah 61:10, 11
