

The Road to Jesus: The Gospel According to Isaiah
The Grand Finale - Part 2
Isaiah 62-64
February 17, 2016

INTRODUCTION:

Back in 54:5, Isaiah had told Israel, "Your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the Lord of Hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth." "Your husband" is your Maker. We have introduced the idea of a marriage relationship between God and the nation of Israel. Back in 50:1, God had said, "Where is the certificate of divorce by which I have sent your mother away?" and the implied answer is - "There isn't one." In other words, God has not thrown off Israel forever. Even though she has prostituted herself, God's love is deep and He wants to restore her to her rightful place in His heart. When a spouse forgives the husband or wife of sexual infidelity, he or she is truly reflecting the forgiving heart of the God of heaven. They are allowed by God to end the marriage relationship, but based on the attitude and repentance of the guilty party, the innocent might very well forgive and maintain that relationship. That's what God does with the guilty party who is the nation of Israel.

In 61:10, we saw last week where the marriage relationship again is portrayed by Isaiah: "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." The imagery of Jesus as the bridegroom and John the baptizer as the friend of the bridegroom in John 3:29 picks up with this imagery from Isaiah as well as passages like Ephesians 5 and 2 Corinthians 11:2 that depict the church of Christ as the bride of Christ.

THE MARRIAGE ITSELF - 62:1-5:

We see in verse 1 God's determination to provide righteousness and salvation to His children. Just like Him walking in the Garden of Eden, calling out to His unfaithful children, God desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

When God provides this righteousness, all the nations will see it (vs 2). The kings of the earth (Gentiles) will see the glory of God's people and they will be called by a new name, that is, they will have a new quality about them, new character. The name "Christian" reflects that new name, this new quality and character. "Rachel" was still "Rachel" when she married me but she also took the name "Holland," which reflected something new about her - her relationship to me. The spiritual name by which Israel would be called would come from the mouth of the Lord. That's why I believe that the name "Christian" given to the disciples in Acts 11:26 was given by the mouth of the Lord, not by Jewish mockers of Christianity.

This new nation, with a new name, will be a "crown of beauty" in the hand of the Lord - what a beautiful image we have. Just like Paul telling his converts in the city of Thessalonica: "who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; cf. Phil. 4:1). Israel is a "royal diadem" in the hand of our God; the "diadem" is the *royal* crown. Israel will, one day, be that *royal priesthood* that God had called her to be way back in Exodus 19:6. When she is baptized into the King of kings and High Priest of God, Jesus Christ.

In that new relationship with the Holy One of Israel, the Jews would no longer be "called" (or named) "forsaken" (Azubah in Hebrew; cf. 54:1-8) nor "desolate" (Shemamah in Hebrew) but "Hephzibah" ("My delight is in her") and "Beulah" ("Married") because - please observe the "for" -

“the Lord delights in you, and to Him your land will be married.” It must be absolutely clear here that God is not talking about the physical return to the land of Palestine! That needs to be perfectly understood here. He is talking about the *spiritual* return to God that would be consummated when God comes to earth in the person of Immanuel.

“I’ve reached the land of corn and wine, And all its riches freely mine, Now shines undimmed the blissful day, But all my sins are cast away Oh, Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land As on the highest mount I stand I look away across the sea Where mansions are prepared for me And view the shining glory shore, My Heaven, my home forever more!” - Edgar Stites.

So this marriage relationship is pictured in verse 5. The key idea here is “So your God will rejoice over you.” How strongly do you want to make God happy? How strongly do you want to make God proud of you? This imagery is fulfilled *spiritually* in the church of Christ (Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:23ff), His bride. It is fulfilled *eternally* in Heaven (Revelation 19:7).

THE WATCHMAN’S REWARD - 62:6-9:

Back in 52:8, Isaiah talked about Israel’s “watchmen” rejoicing at the good news, the “Gospel” that a return to the land of Palestine would be announced by a messenger. In 56:10, he said that Israel’s watchmen were blind. Here, God sets His own watchmen to announce His good news, His Gospel. These watchmen will never keep silent! They will not take rest for themselves! Why? Because the good news is so good that they can’t keep quiet!

It reminds me of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:13: “having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed, therefore I spoke,” we also believe, therefore we also speak.” If you’ve seen Jesus risen from the dead, you’ve got to talk about it.

God will not rest (vs 7) until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. God makes an oath by His own nature that He will accomplish what He intends to accomplish (vs 8) - He will not turn Israel over to their enemies again. Foreigners will not drink the new wine from the Jews’ vineyards. Rather, it will be those who actually *worked* in the vineyard who will eat it (vs 9) and praise God for it, even in the courts of God’s sanctuary.

GOD’S REDEEMED - 62:10-12:

We have seen Isaiah refer to the “highway of holiness” (35:8) several times before. “Clear the way for the people,” Isaiah calls. “Build up, build up the highway. Remove the stones, lift up a standard over the peoples.” The “standard” is the sign, the flag that Isaiah mentions back in 11:10, which is a prophecy of the coming Messiah. This idea is first used back in Exodus 17:15, where the Lord God Himself is said to be the “banner,” same word. This is yet another proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

So, verse 11 (which has three “beholds”), the Lord proclaims to the end of the earth, “Lo, your salvation comes.” This salvation is personified, please observe it is therefore contained in a person, “His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him.” This verse is quoted by Jesus in the book of Revelation referring to His second coming (22:12). Obviously, Jesus came and brought salvation with Him at His first coming. So, and this is a distinction that I think we need to make as we finish our study of Isaiah, there was a *spiritual* fulfillment of these ideas in the first coming of Jesus Christ and there *will be* an eternal fulfillment of these ideas at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Once this salvation comes in the person of the Messiah, His people will be called “The holy people. The redeemed of the Lord” (vs 12; Exo. 19:6). They will be called “sought out, a

city not forsaken.” Notice here that the “city” (Jerusalem) is personified. Isaiah is not talking about and is not concerned about the physical city of Jerusalem. He’s talking about the *people*, in this case, the spiritual people, the faithful Jews along with the Gentiles who respond to God in faith. “Her solemn responsibility is that men should regard her not as a human institution but as a people of holiness” (Young, 473). Such is the responsibility of Christians in the church of Christ today.

JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS (CHAPTER 63):

THE JUDGE IDENTIFIED: GOD THE WARRIOR - 63:1-3:

Notice back in 62:11, the Servant of the Lord (salvation) is coming and bringing His reward (for the faithful) and His recompense (for the unfaithful). That recompense is illustrated against the unfaithful evil here in chapter 63, directed against Edom (cf. 34:5-10). Edomites were the cousins of Israel and the perpetual enemies of Jacob’s descendants and they are used to illustrate the wrath of the Servant against the unfaithful.

So, the Mighty Warrior, as the Servant of the Lord has been portrayed before (59:17), will come through Edom “with garments of glowing colors,” from Bozrah, Edom’s capital. He is clothed majestically, marching in the greatness of His strength (vs 1). He speaks in righteousness so we are viewing a spiritual leader, not a physical leader. “From Gen. 1:3 to Rev. 21:5 the main characteristic of the God of the Bible is that he speaks, revealing his character, his ways, and his will to his creatures (see esp. Isa. 48)” (Oswalt, 596).

Why is His garments red? Remember that “Esau,” the father of the Edomites, was named apparently for his red hair (Gen. 25:25). In fact, that may be why Isaiah uses “Edom,” to make a play on the name “Esau/red.” The Divine Warrior’s garments are red, like one who treads the wine press (vs 2) but they are red because He has trampled His enemies and stained His garments with their blood (vs 3). This imagery is graphic but it illustrates to us both the wrath of God that is directed toward unbelieving sinners and the end result they will suffer.

Why does Jesus implement judgment on the unbelievers?

THE REASON FOR JUDGMENT DECLARED - 63:4-6:

God has determined in His heart the “day of vengeance” against His enemies and the “year of redemption” for His faithful followers (vs 4).

No man was there to help (vs 5). This is not the first time God has said such. No human being can save man from his sins. There was no one to uphold His faithful followers so, God had to extend His own arm to bring salvation to His people and wrath to His enemies. Again, we saw in Isaiah 53:1 that the “arm of the Lord” is a metaphor for the coming Servant, Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 - God treads down the peoples in His anger, elaborating on the idea found back in verses 2-3. He made them drunk from His wrath, making them drink from the cup of His wrath and then “poured out their lifeblood on the earth.” (See Revelation 14:17-20).

GOD’S TENDERNESS AND COMPASSION - 63:7-14:

Toward the faithful believing ones, Isaiah will make mention of the positive side of God, the positive aspect of His nature - His “lovingkindnesses, His praises, His goodness, His compassion, the abundance of His lovingkindness” (vs 7). This “lovingkindness” of God is: 1.) displayed in action; 2.) bountiful; 3.) motivated out of a heart of compassion (Motyer, 437).

Why does God extend His lovingkindness to His people - and we must understand this expression "His people" to refer not just to the Jews but to the Gentiles as well, those who respond to God in faith and obedience? Verse 8 - Because they are His people. Sons who will not deal falsely. They are the ones for whom He has become the Savior.

Verse 9 - in terms reminiscent of chapter 53, in their affliction, God was afflicted. God saved them through the angel of His presence. In His love (this is the only time Isaiah uses the noun "love" in his preaching; the verb is used three times: 43:4; 48:14; 61:8) and mercy, He redeemed them, lifted them, carried them.

Reflecting back on their history, Isaiah reminds them that they rebelled against God (vs 10). They grieved His Holy Spirit by rejecting the message of the prophets. When they did that - please observe - they turn God into their enemy. What a frightening thought! When you don't obey God like you should, you make Him your enemy. "Thus sin is finally a matter of the will, and until the will has been brought into submission to the Holy Spirit, consistently holy behavior is not possible" (Oswalt, 607).

Remember the days of old, the days of Moses, specifically when God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, through the Red Sea? The elders, leaders, of Israel were "shepherds" of His flock? He put His Spirit in their midst (vs 11).

God guided Moses and Israel with His "glorious arm" (vs 12) and divided the waters, making for Himself an "everlasting name." Please observe, in fact you may want to make a note in the margin of your Bible, that "of old" in verse 11 is the same Hebrew word as "everlasting" in verse 12. What that shows is that "everlasting" does not mean "eternal." It means "of indefinite duration." Everything the Old Testament says is "everlasting," such as the covenant of circumcision is not "eternal." Context demands how we translate and understand the word.

Verse 13 - God led Israel through the depths and like a horse running through the wilderness with no obstacles, so Israel did not stumble under God's leadership. When they *did* stumble, it's because they weren't following God's leadership!

Just like cattle finding rest, water, refreshment in the valley, so God's Spirit brought Israel rest (vs 14) when they listened to and obeyed Him. Thus God led His people and made His own name "glorious."

For all of this, Isaiah breaks out into a prayer to God, on behalf, no doubt, of the faithful remnant of the Israelites. Beginning in verse 15 we have a prayer that actually runs through chapter 64 and, in my opinion, all of these verses should be included in one chapter. It is a prayer that is composed of seven parts:

PRAYER FOR MERCY AND HELP - 63:15-64:12:

Part 1 - Where is God's love? - 63:15-16 - In verse 15, Isaiah calls on God - who dwells in a glorious and holy habitation - to show His zeal and mighty deeds and not to restrain the stirrings of His heart and compassion toward Israel. Remember, these words are written for the nation of Israel for when they experience the 70 year exile in Babylon. These words are to sustain them and their faith until they return to Palestine and every subsequent generation until the coming of Jesus Christ.

God is Israel's Father (vs 16), even if they have not always acted like the descendants of Abraham nor would Jacob (Israel) recognize them. God is their Lord, their Father, their Redeemer. Oswalt writes (612): "This is a profound thought: Israel is not an ethnic, or linguistic, or national entity, but a spiritual one. God is their *Father*."

Part 2 - Why does the Lord remain alienated? 63:17-19 - In verse 17, they picture God as having caused them to stray, hardening their hearts. Of course, God did not cause that except His holiness drove them away because of their own sins. Yet, Isaiah calls on God to return the tribes to their heritage - the blessings they were heirs to under Abraham.

At one time, verse 18, God's holy people possessed the sanctuary, if for a little while. But their adversaries stomped it down under their feet. At the time Isaiah writes this, the temple has not been torn down and desecrated by King Nebuchadnezzar but, again, back in chapter 39, Isaiah promised King Hezekiah that it would happen.

Because of their sins, verse 19, Israel had become "like those over whom God had never ruled," that is, like the Gentiles, those who were never called by God's name.

Part 3 - Why didn't God do something? - 64:1-3: When it looks like all is lost and there is no end to the evil and you wonder if things will ever be right before God again, then you want God to shake things up. You want God to reach down from heaven and make things right. That's Isaiah's call in His prayer here in 64:1-3. "Rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might shake in God's presence" (vs 1).

"Make your name known to your adversaries," (vs 2), that the nations may tremble in God's presence.

At one point, verse 3, God did things that were awesome, unexpected and the mountains quaked in His presence. Isaiah and the faithful remnant want God to do it again.

Haggai, the prophet, lived after that 70-year exile, during the rebuilding of the second temple in Jerusalem. In 2:6, Haggai picks up the idea of this "shaking not only of the earth but also the heavens." One day, Haggai says, God will do that. The Hebrew writer quotes that passage from Haggai in Hebrews 12:26 applying the idea to the first coming of Jesus Christ. Yes, God did "rend the heavens apart" as He Himself took the form of mankind and came to walk on the earth. And to strengthen our interpretation of this text (64:1-4) as applying to the first coming of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul quotes this verse 4 in 1 Corinthians 2:9, applying it, again, to the first coming of Jesus Christ. Paul sees verse 4 as referring to the "newness and uniqueness of the Gospel" (Young, 494).

Part 4 - Maybe it is too late to hope - 64:4-5 - Verse 4, they want God to do things that "eye has not seen," nor "ear heard" - what God does on behalf of those who wait on God. "As was just said," writes Oswalt (623): "waiting for God is, in many ways, what Isaiah is about. The book is about waiting for a God whose face is hidden to reveal himself to his people (8:17); waiting for the restoration of a people from long before they were even exiled; waiting for a Servant to deal a death blow to sin; waiting for a Messiah to establish his kingdom forever."

Yes, God answered Isaiah's prayer.

Whom does God like? Verse 5 - He meets those "who rejoice in doing righteousness." Those who "remember" God in His ways. Yes, God was angry, understandably and justifiably so

“because we sinned,” Isaiah says. “We continued in our sins for a long time. Shall we be saved?” Do we even deserve salvation? “The verbs *sin* and *angry* are perfect tenses - it was your fixed mind to be angry and ours to continue in sin. What a collision course! So is salvation possible?” (Motyer, 442).

Part 5 - Sin and helplessness - 64:6-7 - Verse 6 - “We are like one who is unclean. The right things we do, they are - in comparison to the holiness of God - they are like filthy garments. “Filthy garments” is literally “menstrual rags.” Compared to the stability and consistent nature of the God of heaven, we wither like a leaf and our iniquities - like wind - carry us away from God.

Speaking in hyperbole, verse 7, Isaiah says “no one calls on God’s name. No one arouses himself to take hold of God.” God has hidden His face from Israel and left them in the power of their own iniquities.

Part 6 - 64:8-9 - In verse 8, Isaiah draws his prayer to a conclusion. God is their Lord and their Father. Beyond that, He is their potter and they are the clay. They are the “work” of His hands. Do for them as they need. Make of them what He wills.

“Do not be angry,” Isaiah prays in verse 9, “beyond measure. Do not remember their iniquities forever.” Why? Because they are His people.

Part 7 - Can love still be withheld? 64:10-12 - The Israelites in exile and, especially, those who will return to Palestine, will look around and see that God’s holy cities have become a wilderness (vs 10) - even the holy city of Jerusalem / Zion. She is a wilderness, a desolation.

The beautiful and holy house - the temple in Jerusalem - “where our fathers have praised you” (vs 11), has been burned with fire and all the precious things it contained have become a ruin. The faithful remnant will observe and see that all these things have happened to them because of their sins.

So, in verse 12, Isaiah concludes the prayer by asking God if He will restrain Himself, restrain His compassion, His love and mercy, His lovingkindness and His goodness at the sight of the wretched, deplorable condition of the nation of Israel. Will He keep silent and continue to afflict Israel “beyond measure?”

Of course, the answer is “no.” In chapters 65-66, God speaks to Isaiah, to Israel, to the faithful remnant and He tells them, as we will conclude our study of Isaiah, that restoration is coming. A spiritual restoration is coming. That restoration will begin, spiritually speaking, in the person of the Servant of the Lord, Immanuel, and the New Testament confirms that for us - spiritually fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But, even for us, this imagery of a renewed, restored relationship with Jehovah God, we are made holy by His power and His might, this is fulfilled eternally in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem in the sky, heaven itself, when we arrive in the very presence of God.

Next Week:
The Grand Finale - Part 3
Isaiah 65-66