

Note: this reading is the 4th in a 4-part series on Isaiah's portraits of the Messiah

Isaiah 59-66 – The Anointed Conqueror

In previous devotionals, we have surveyed two of Isaiah's three predictive portraits of the Messiah. First, he predicts the Messiah as a ruling King whose just and righteous reign is characterized by peace and prosperity for His subjects (Isa. 1-37). But how can sinful people be eligible to enter His kingdom? This dilemma is resolved by Isaiah's second predictive portrait of the Messiah as God's suffering Servant (Isa. 42-55), as the One who suffers and dies for the sins of God's people. It was to signify Jesus' fulfillment of this role that John the Baptist introduced Him as "the Lamb of God, who comes to take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

But what about the people who refuse to admit their need for His death for their sins, and who remain in opposition to Him? Is evil to forever run free? How will God's righteous kingdom reign unless those who persist in rebellion against Him are ultimately defeated? Isaiah answers this question in his third and final portrait of the Messiah as God's anointed Conqueror (Isaiah 59-66). Since He has willingly suffered and died to forgive sinful people, He has the right to condemn and defeat those who reject their need for His forgiveness. True, as God's Servant, Jesus could say that "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:17). But speaking of His return at the end of the age as God's anointed Conqueror, he warned that "He who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (John 3:18,19).



We turn now to see how Isaiah portrayed this sobering third portrait of the Messiah. He relays the dialogue between Him and one of the men standing watch for His coming (see Isa. 62:6). The watchman sees a mighty Warrior striding toward him, but is perplexed about his apparel:

Isaiah 63:1 “Who is this who comes from Edom, with garments of glowing (crimson) colors from Bozrah, this One who is majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength?”

Back comes the Warrior’s answer:

“It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” This righteous Warrior prefers to use His might to rescue people. But the watchman persists in his question about his clothing:

Isaiah 63:2 Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? Why is the Warrior’s clothing soaked with a red-colored stain? The Warrior gives a sobering answer:

Isaiah 63:3 “I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. ⁴ For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. ⁵ I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me, and My wrath upheld Me. ⁶ I trod down the peoples in My anger and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.” The Warrior is soaked with the lifeblood of His adversaries, which He has just single-handedly defeated. Just as the Servant alone suffered and died to rescue His people from judgment, so the Anointed Conqueror alone condemns and defeats those who persist in rejecting His rescue.

This is a ghastly image – but remember: How can God’s righteous kingdom reign while there are still unrepentant enemies opposing His rule? Remember also that this Warrior is the same Person who has previously appeared as God’s Servant, not to shed His enemies’ blood,



but to shed His blood for their sins, that they might be forgiven (Isa. 52:15). Only those who reject His loving sacrifice become subject to His righteous wrath.

What awesome freedom God gives us to respond to His offered salvation! He paid its awful price – His own Son’s death on the cross – to purchase our forgiveness, thus proving His abundant lovingkindness toward us. He begs us to receive His salvation, but He will not force us to accept it, nor will He shield us from the consequences of rejecting it. We may freely choose, but we are fully responsible for our choice, and we cannot both choose to reject His salvation and yet still benefit from it. So let us choose wisely by humbly receiving Jesus as God’s Servant before He comes as God’s Anointed Conqueror!

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