Jesus in the Prophets – Isaiah part 2

1. Introduction

a. Last time we looked at the first half of the book of Isaiah and saw chapters 1-39 describe judgment, hope, and a future messianic King. Even though God was going to judge Israel and take her into exile this was not the end of the story. He would raise up a King who would fulfil all his covenantal promises. As we looked at these passages it was evident that this King was Jesus.

b. Isaiah 39 left us with very little hope for Israel or the lineage of David. But as we turn to Isaiah 40 we step into a new world of hope as we hear a voice announcing:

Isaiah 40:1-2 *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.[2] Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

c. The time of exile is described here as a period of "warfare" that came about as a result of Israel's "iniquity." Now that Israel has paid its dues, God announces "comfort" - a new day has dawned. What follows is a very famous biblical poem:

Isaiah 40:3-5 *A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. **4** Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. **5** And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

d. God is going to return to his land by crossing the great tract of wilderness that lay between Babylon and Jerusalem. His glorious presence is going to take up residence in the temple once more and the great promise to Abraham of blessing for all nations (remember Genesis 12:1-3) will come true.

e. But the response of the Israelites to this great announcement of hope is to complain. It appears that the Israelites are still bitter about the exile, and they think they've been ignored and abandoned by their God. God's response is what we find in Isaiah 41-47 as He lays out His case to the people.

f. In Isaiah 48, God accuses the post-exile Israelites of continuing their hollow allegiance and idolatry, which ultimately disqualifies them from being God's servant to the nations. Instead, God says he's going to do "*a new thing, hidden things that you have not known*" (48:6), and then we hear a new voice speak up in Isaiah 48:16: *"Now the Lord God has sent me and His Spirit"*

g. This brings us to Isaiah 49-55, which describes this new servant's mission, first to Israel and then to all nations. These chapters are full of rich poetic descriptions of this servant and we don't have time to look at them all so we will focus on the most glorious of them all: Isaiah 52:13- 53:12

2. Isaiah 53 – The suffering servant

a. This passage contains the most quoted Old Testament verses in the New Testament and begins with a glorious promise.

Is.52:13-15 *Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. **14** As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and*

*his form beyond that of the children of mankind—**15** so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.*

b. We need to know right from the start that the servant will act wisely and succeed even though he will be despised and rejected, oppressed and afflicted, pierced and crushed, marred beyond human likeness yet, through it all he will be successful!

c. But this passage does not present us with a glorious and powerful king – it presents a man who first appeared to them as an insignificant low-life, god-forsaken and rejected by people. There was nothing about the servant that looked impressive or important

Isaiah 53:1-3 *Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? **2** For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. **3** He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

d. However, this view of the servant couldn't have been more wrong. In reality, the servant was suffering and dying on behalf of Israel's sin and unfaithfulness. It was Israel who rejected God's servant, and they led him to his death and killed him (Isaiah 53:7-9). But just like Joseph and his brothers who planned evil to destroy him, God orchestrated their evil to result in good.

Isaiah 53:4-9 *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. **5** But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. **6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. **7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. **8** By oppression and judgement he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? **9** And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

e. It was actually God's mysterious purpose that the servant would die at the hands of Israel, because of their sin and on behalf of their sin (v10). His death would play the role of a sacrificial guilt offering providing atonement for their evil.

f. But this isn't the end of the servant's story.

Is.53:10-11 *Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his day the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. **11** Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

g. After his rejection and death, we all of a sudden read that the servant will see his offspring and prolong his days and be satisfied. His death was actually the opposite of failure. It was his way of bearing the sins of his people so that the guilty can be accounted righteous before

God. Guilty Israel, who not only ended up in exile for their sins, but also killed God's servant sent to them, is pronounced righteous, not for anything they have done, but because of what the servant did on their behalf.

h. This is why the book of Isaiah, along with the Psalms, are the most quoted Old Testament books by Jesus, as well as the apostles who wrote the gospels! Ultimately, Isaiah's portrait of the suffering servant king as the true victor over human evil didn't come from nowhere. It's a profound development of that strange, poetic image we were introduced to all the way back in Genesis 3, about the suffering seed of the woman who would destroy the serpent.

Gen.3:15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

i. This, we discover, is how God would overcome the horrific evil that has duped humanity into thinking they are God. This is how God will become the victor over the human evil that resulted from that tragic error. God would send a son of Eve to conquer evil by allowing evil to conquer him, then overcoming its power of death by his love and eternal life.

j. There's a reason why the poem of Isaiah 53 is introduced with the phrase "good news," and there's also a good reason why all four stories of Jesus in the New Testament were eventually called "The Good News" or "The Gospel." It's the strangest good news you will ever hear, but also the best news. It's the story of God's defeat of evil so that you and I can be rescued from the human condition, the death we see all around us, and that which we find inside ourselves. In this story of the servant's death and resurrection, we discover the love of God that leads to true life.

3. Isaiah 63 – the Warrior King

a. Isaiah has much more to show us about this King and the way in which he would bring about the fullness of Yahweh's promises. Isaiah 40-66 is rich with poetic descriptions of Jesus not just as a messianic King and a Suffering Servant but also as a Righteous Judge. The latter chapters or Isaiah are full of passages that give us insight into the second coming of Jesus.

b. Isaiah 63 is quite a contrast to Isaiah 53 and many Christians struggle with a Saviour who not only suffers but also administers justice. However, the great glory of Isaiah is that it portrays the promised Messiah in all his fullness including the Warrior King who will crush the serpents head.

c. Isaiah 60-62 is one of the most detailed prophetic descriptions of Jerusalem's glory and destiny. God will transform Jerusalem spiritually, physically, relationally, financially, politically, etc. Isaiah 60-62 elaborates on God's promise in 59:16-21—to send Jesus, the Divine Warrior, who will come to Zion to those who turn from sin. Then in 63:1-6 we see the Divine Warrior who will destroy the Antichrist's armies who attack Zion.

d. Isaiah tells us that a time was coming when Messiah would no longer be "silent" in response to Israel's prayers for the destruction of her enemies, but He would openly intervene in power to save them.

Isa. 62:1 *For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.*

e. Jesus kept silent in terms of releasing His judgments to confront evil openly in the nations. He restrained Himself according to God's timetable. He has kept silent for a long time—for

almost 2,000 years since the cross. The promise of Isaiah 42 speaks of his desire to bring justice – but only at the *right time.*

Is.42:13-15 *The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.* ***14*** *For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labour; I will gasp and pant.* ***15*** *I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation;*
I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools.

f. Throughout Isaiah we see this recurring theme that there is a Day when Messiah will act and bring his justice to bear. Isaiah 63 describes what that day will look like.

Is.63:1-6 *Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."* ***2*** *Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the wine press?* ***3*** *"I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.* ***4*** *For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.* ***5*** *I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.* ***6*** *I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."*

g. This is not our normal picture of Jesus but there is a day coming when this is the Jesus we will see. The great thing about Isaiah is that it portrays the fullness of Messiah. Yes, he is the King of the line of David, he is the Suffering Servant who gave his life for us but he is also the Divine Warrior who will wreak vengeance on the Antichrist and all those who join with him to come against Jerusalem.

h. Like John in Revelation, Isaiah is shown things that he does not understand and so he asks two questions. "Who is this?" and "Why is your apparel red?" Messiah identifies himself as the one who will travel from Bozrah, the capital of ancient Edom (modern-day Jordan) to Jerusalem - a 70-mile journey between the two cities.

i. His garments appeared to be dyed red but as we read on he explains that this is the blood of those he "*has trampled in his wrath"* This is Jesus, with the resurrected saints who have met him in the air and escort him back to the earth. As he makes his way to deliver Jerusalem he releases the last judgements of the bowls of wrath.

Rev.17:14 *They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."*

j. Jesus' garments are stained with the blood of His enemies as He treads the winepress (63:2-3). He does this alone because no other king will engage their army with Jesus against the Antichrist. His anger, rooted in zeal for love, is different than sinful anger that is rooted in selfishness. This is the Bridegroom who will not allow his bride to be overcome by another.

k. Jesus will gather, kill, and replace the demonized kings and their evil leadership teams in one event. This is referred to as God's winepress of wrath because Jesus will trample them like grapes to deliver His beloved people and to establish a new world order—the Millennium.

l. John saw the Lord's end-time winepress of wrath resulting in blood flowing for 1,600 furlongs (about 185 miles) which will cover the length of Israel—from Bozrah to Megiddo is 130 miles.

Rev.14:19-20 *So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God.* ***20*** *And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia*

m. Messiah explained that He must judge with fury to bring full redemption to the nations

Is. 63:4-5 ***4*** *For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.* ***5*** *I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me*

n. Yahweh anointed Jesus to proclaim the good news and to heal and bless people The good news includes the "acceptable year of the Lord" and the "day of vengeance" they are two essential sides of salvation. It is a year of favour, but only a day of judgment.

Is.61:1-2 *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;* ***2*** *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;*

o. Jesus announced in Nazareth's synagogue that He fulfilled 61:1-3. He stopped reading after "the acceptable year" and did not mention "the day of vengeance" (Lk. 4:18-19). The day of salvation began at the cross while the day of vengeance begins in Great Tribulation.

p. This is what the final redemption will look like. Our Messiah is a God of justice and righteousness and to bring righteousness to all of creation (to put all wrong things right) those who oppose him will be destroyed. Jesus is returning to Jerusalem as the Bridegroom King and the Divine Warrior to release salvation to Zion (Jerusalem) and all the nations.

4. Why vengeance?

a. We have to put Jesus' nature and long history of love and kindness into context to grasp this. How far have these kings pressed in wickedness to become the objects of the wrath of the Lamb?

b. The kings of the earth and their armies make war against Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:19), participate in imprisoning and murdering millions of Christians and Jewish people (Rev. 17:6; 18:27; 19:2), embrace immoral practices (Rev. 9:21; 11:8; 17:2; 18:3), and come into an alliance with the Antichrist (Rev. 16:14). They represent the largest number of mass murders in human history.

c. Consider the opportunity the Lamb gives these evil kings to see God's glory and to repent! In the Great Tribulation, He will release 21 judgments (Rev. 6-16) rather than just one, showing that He is slow to anger and rich in mercy. They experience the miracles of two witnesses. Yet, they do not repent but blaspheme God (Rev. 16:9, 11, 21) and commit blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

d. Bloodguilt is the price that God requires for the shedding of innocent blood (Deut. 19:10). God requires death as the judicial payment for murder! Those who ask for mercy, appealing to Jesus' blood to cover them, can be forgiven.

e. Some question why the Lord has not killed evil dictators who are mass murderers more quickly. Consider Jesus' long history of showing love, especially in His incarnation and death. Consider the mercy to be shown to rebellious Israel, even after they make a covenant with

Antichrist and become a city like Sodom (54:7-8; Rev. 11:8). Note the kindness of Isaiah 60-62 before Isaiah 63. Consider kindness shown to unsaved survivors of the Great Tribulation in the Millennial Kingdom.

f. People who have felt helpless before a strong oppressor seeking to murder them can more easily understand the intensity than those who have never needed to be delivered from physical harm. If a woman were attacked by a group of violent men, what her husband did or did not do would speak loudly to her. Jesus is making a statement of His commitment to Israel and of the intensity of His love and emotion for His bride by personally being involved in the battle. He shows the true depth of emotion He has for her in this act. He will not let anyone harm her from this time on.

g. Jesus was often "silent" throughout 6,000 years of history to allow man's free will to surface fully, but He will change the way that He expresses His government of the earth in the Millennium. God's winepress of wrath will signal that Jesus will no longer be silent to injustice but will rule by the rod with swift and exacting penalties. This new precedent will be a great deterrent to crime in the Millennium, resulting in a safer society and a gracious warning before the rebellion at the end of the Millennium.

5. Isaiah's prayer

a. Isaiah concludes with his prayer to Yahweh recognising his kindness and longsuffering with his people and crying out for the Warrior King to come.

Is.63:7 *I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.*

Is.64:10-12 *Your holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.* ***11*** *Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins.* ***12*** *Will you restrain yourself at these things, O Lord? Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly?*

b. Isaiah was crying out for his day as the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and its glorious temple. From our New testament vantage point we know that Jesus did come to his people but it was as the Suffering Servant opening up the way for them to come into salvation through the blood of Messiah.

c. Those who are redeemed are those who will join Jesus as he comes as the Divine Warrior finally fulfilling all Yahweh's promises and finally crushing the serpents head. Yahweh made a promise to his people from the very beginning of their rebellion. That promise runs throughout the whole bible from Genesis to Abraham, to Moses and David and in the words of Isaiah. Yahweh will not forget his people. He will restore all things. Thus Isaiah ends with these words from Yahweh:

Is.66:22-23 *"For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain.* ***23*** *From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the Lord.*