



Isaiah 54-66

The LORD God Reigns!

The song of salvation through the vicarious, suffering sacrifice comes to a great fortissimo of triumph. The Suffering messiah is victorious. The sacrifice is complete. The price of redemption has been paid in full. He has risen from the dead. He lives! "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" History is in His hands. He causes all things to work for His redemptive glory. He is the sovereign God who transcends and controls history for His redemptive glory.

Isaiah begins chapter fifty-four with a glorious shout of joy because the Suffering Servant has accomplished our redemption. "The golden passional of the Old Testament is complete." He says, "Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no children; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed . . ." (v.1). There is reason for this shouting. Those who are barren because of the captivity will now bear a tent full of children. They will have experienced God's blessings. "Enlarge the place of your tent; Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your pegs Your descendents will possess nations, and they will resettle the desolate cities" (vv. 2-3).

The LORD, the Holy One of Israel, is our Redeemer and He has had compassion upon His people. Even though He chastised Israel because of her rebellion, He has remained steadfast in His unshakable love. Isaiah quotes the LORD in verse ten:

"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,"
Says the Lord who has compassion on you.

The Redeemer has come who pays a full price in order to set His people free. "A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the Lord (59:20).

SING THE INVITATION (55:1-3)

Because of the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh He can now offer an invitation for everyone to come and receive living water freely.

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.

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And you who have no money come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost.
"Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And delight yourself in abundance.
"Incline your ear and come to Me.
Listen, that you may live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
According to the faithful mercies shown to David (vv. 1-3).

Based upon Isaiah fifty-three everything has now been prepared. The "Ho" (*hoi*) in verse one expresses a deep sorrow on account of the unsatisfied spiritual thirst and toilsome labor.

The "water" speaks of spiritual satisfaction, and "wine and milk" is figurative of spiritual revival and nourishment (2 Peter 2:2). The true believer "longs for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

The "waters" reminds us of the word of Jesus Christ in John 4:14; 7:37. Because of His redemptive work on the cross He can offer us spiritual water that will quench our spiritual thirst. Jesus offers us the great invitation to come to Him and drink. Jesus said, ". . . whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. . . . If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. " '

The one who comes and drinks of these waters must have an intense hunger for God. He must come like the prodigal (Luke 15:16ff). The only way to satisfy the soul is obedient faith.

This is a marvelous picture of grace in the Old Testament. These blessings and gifts of divine grace are obtained by faith alone. The humble believer can receive this spiritual satisfaction by a sense of need and readiness to accept it. The apostle Paul stated it wisely, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Romans 11:6). "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The resurrected, glorified Savior offers the same invitation. "I will give to the one who thirsts from the springs of the water of life without cost" (Revelation 21:6). In Revelation 22:16-17, He said:

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

What must a person do to receive this water that satisfies? God says, "Incline your ear and come to Me.

What must a person do to receive this water that satisfies? God says, "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David" (Isaiah 55:3). "Seek [acquire experiential knowledge] the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near" (v. 6). "Call" now while He stands ready with super abundance of grace to meet your need.

This "everlasting covenant . . . according to the faithful mercies shown to David" is continuation of the long string of covenants Yahweh made beginning with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob regarding His people Israel. Some Bible scholars see the everlasting covenant as the New Covenant (Jer. 32:40; Heb. 13:20). Other place the emphasis on the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:8-16) which is an everlasting covenant. God still has a purpose for Israel. He has not abandoned His people. He keeps His eternal covenants. This "eternal covenant" is secured in the Second David, the Son of God, the Messiah (cf. Hosea 3:5; Ezekiel 34:23-25; Jeremiah 30:9). The father of John the Baptist, Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied of Jesus saying, God "has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant. . . ." (Luke 1:69). That was also the conviction of the New Testament saints (Acts 2:29-36; 13:22-23, 34-39; Romans 11:25-29).

How can God offer such an invitation to everyone, including the Gentiles? God's ways are not our ways (55:8-11; cf. 59:1-2). "Behold, the Lord's hand is not short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear" (59:1). God established David's everlasting throne with the idea that behind David stood David's greater Son.

Don't blame God for the separation that sin brings. It is not God; it is "your iniquities" that "have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, so that He does not hear" (59:2). Therefore the solution is quite clear. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (55:7). "Let him return to the LORD" "involves a complete right-about-face." Respond to this great invitation and receive His light.

SEE THE LIGHT (60:1-7)

Chapter sixty is a blaze of light in the spiritual darkness that covered the whole earth. Jewish people and Gentiles are sitting in darkness of unbelief. The prophet shouts, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (60:1-3). In the second servant poem Isaiah had declared, "I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (49:6).

Who is this "light" that has visited those dwelling in darkness? Who can penetrate the spiritual darkness that covers the earth? Why He has already come! "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant . . ." (Luke 1:68-69). Again Dr. Luke writes, "Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79, all capitalized words quote Old Testament). It is the heavenly glory of the Lord that flares up (Isaiah 6:3; 24:23; 40:5; 58:8).

The Light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ gives us a perfect, plentiful, complete understanding of this great salvation. With the strong voice of the great I AM Jesus stated assertively, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12).

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Isaiah had promised, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" (9:2). They saw the "great light" that illuminated their spiritual darkness when Jesus walked the land. Jesus is that "great light" (cf. John 1:4-5). He said, "I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness" (12:46).

Gentiles are drawn to the light of Jesus. Even at the birth of Jesus non-Jews came to worship Him (Matthew 2:1ff). How insightful to compare Isaiah 60:19-20 with Revelation 21:4; 22:5. There is a wonderful day coming when we will no longer need the moon and the sun because "you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory" (Isaiah 60:19). In the "new heaven and new earth" "the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it" (Revelation 21:23-24). There will be no night there (v. 25) "because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever" (22:5).

SAVIOR'S SELF-IDENTIFICATION (61:1-2)

The speaker in Isaiah 61:1-2 is the Servant of the LORD, the Messiah whom we saw in chapters 42-53. What the speaker says is identical with what has already been said about Him (42:1; 48:16; 50:4; 42:7; 49:7).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn . . . (61:1-2).

This is the most beautiful self-portrait of the Messiah. Jesus Christ saw Himself as the fulfillment of these grand passages in Isaiah. After reading aloud from the scroll of Isaiah 61:1-2 that was handed Him in the Synagogue at Nazareth, He rolled up the scroll and began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21). He announced that He was the one to fulfill this prophecy. It "stands fulfilled." The "favorable year" means the real year of Jubilee had arrived. The Messianic prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled that day. The age had arrived!

Luke 3:22; 4:1, 18 affirms to us that "the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove . . . and Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit . . . was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness . . . and Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit."

No one binds up the wounds of broken hearts like Jesus. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus issues an invitation and the only requirement is to be "weary and heavy-laden." He binds up the broken hearted and brings relief to the afflicted, suffering humanity. Jesus put the compassion of His loving heart into action. Luke 4:40 tells us, "while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on everyone of them, He was healing them" (cf. 7:13-15; 8:43-56; 13:11-15; 17:11-19).

It is interesting that Jesus ended His reading of this passage in Isaiah with "to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." Isaiah, however, did not stop there. He continued, "And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn" (61:2b,c).

Jesus ushered in the Gospel of grace at His first coming. When He returns it will be "the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus foretold the coming of the day of vengeance upon the nation of Israel and Jerusalem in Luke 21:22-24. The Suffering Servant of Yahweh has been realized in the Son of Man who will reign as sovereign King.

SOVEREIGN KING REIGNS (65:17-66:24)

"Nowhere in the Old Testament is a more glorious picture of the future kingdom drawn" than in this passage. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Isaiah brings his grand Gospel message to a climax when he sees the sovereign LORD God reigning throughout eternity as King of kings and Lord of lords. God reigns throughout eternity and He is in charge of the affairs of the nations. He makes a new everlasting covenant with those who accept His sovereignty and salvation. They live in a new city of incomparable beauty and complete security, the New Jerusalem, where the LORD God and the Lamb are the temple and the Lamb is the light (cf. Revelation 21:22-27).

What God is going to do is produce something for all intents and purposes new. It is so radically new that it is the result of God's creative activity. Only God can produce this new heaven and new earth. This new work of creation demands the sovereign creative power which brought about the original creation. "For behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth" (65:17-19). Isaiah's picture of the Messianic age penetrates regions beyond the spiritual horizon of any and all Old Testament prophets. This radically new creation will powerfully demonstrate the glory of God the Creator. It will be so dramatic that the old heavens and earth will not be remembered. All the ravages of sin and depravity will be remembered no more. We cannot imagine what is in store for all of creation (Romans 8:19-22).

The present system of universe will roll up like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4; Matthew 24:29; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 6:12-14; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Romans 9:19-21; Mark 13:25). He makes all things new. In the New Jerusalem, in the new heaven and new earth, the Lord God reigns!

From where Isaiah stood time and eternity, the age of grace, the millennium and the new heaven and new earth were not sharply focused. He saw the grand eternal landscape. We need the vision of John on Patmos to bring clearly into focus his new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21:1). The apostle John informs us that they follow the Millennium (Revelation 20:4). Isaiah did not make a distinction between the two, but saw them as one long period of sovereign rule. Even the thousand year reign of Christ will be only a second in time when compared to the eternal ages to come.

Every time we lead someone to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their substitute we are involved in something that will still be worthwhile a million years from now. One bright morning we will see people gathered there "from every nation and all tribes and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes." We'll join in that heavenly multitude singing a new song:

"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation . . ." (Revelation 5:9).

Oh, come Lord Jesus, come!

Isaiah ends his scroll with a striking contrast and reminder to every generation. Our future depends upon what we do with Jesus Christ today. For those who will humble themselves and believe in Him as their suffering Servant who died for their sins we will continue eternally before Him in His presence (66:22-23). However, for those who reject His offer of grace today there is eternal rejection and suffering (66:24).

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However, for those who reject His offer of grace today there is eternal rejection and suffering (66:24).

One thing is certain, "All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD God (66:23). Before whom will they bow? Philippians 2:9-11 says it is at the name of Jesus that every knee will bow and "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." There will be no exceptions when He returns. The LORD God reigns!

When the famous composer George Frederick Handel was sixty years old he was going through extremely difficult circumstances in his life. He was probably at his lowest financially, physically and emotionally. He had been ruined by jealous rivals in the music world and creditors were threatening to jail him. He was partially paralyzed, experiencing clinical depression and at the point of giving up.

One day he received a letter and package from Charles Jennens. In it were papers on which were scribbled passages of Scripture. Handel mulled over those Scripture verses and began to write. Day after day he wrote. He walked about in his room, weeping, crying and writing. With tears flowing down his cheeks he cried, "Hallelujah!" Handel finally went to bed exhausted and slept for seventeen hours. He had completed the greatest song on the sovereignty of God ever written –the *Messiah*.

In London in 1743 the first audience that listened to *Messiah* was so deeply moved by it that when the "Hallelujah Chorus" was reached, the king of England and the people stood to their feet. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and shall reign, King of kings and Lord of lords, forever and ever. Hallelujah!" Yes, He reigns forever and ever. Hallelujah!

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