

Review

We've slowed our pace quite a bit in recent weeks as we study through the book of Isaiah. This makes possible the closer analysis of some passages, but can - over time - cause us to lose the context of the overall section.

The Lord has been challenging the false gods of the nations to defend their deity. "Foretell the future, and everyone will know you're gods," He said. But they were speechless before the true God.

Then, the Lord gave us another prophecy of the future: foretelling of the person, work, and ministry of Jesus Christ's first coming. The Father called Him, "My Servant."

This prompted praise from Isaiah, and a command to worship the Lord with volume and song.

And now Isaiah says...

42:13 The Warrior Lord

The Lord has shown mercy upon the earth for a very long time. But it shall not always be so. Just as there was a first coming in gentleness, there is a second coming in fierceness.

When the Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, showed up the first time, He was not crying out or raising His voice. He allowed His enemies to appear victorious over Him when they killed Him. But the second time He comes, He will shout with a war cry. He will return as a warrior and prevail against His enemies. They will be crushed to dust.

42:14 The Day Of Labor

The idiom of labor has been used throughout the Scripture to describe the end times. Jesus said,

Mark 13:8 "...nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are the beginning of birth pangs."

And the apostle Paul wrote,

1Th. 5:2-3 For you yourselves know full well that the day of

the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

But labor has also been used to describe terrible pain. Back in chapter 13, we read,

Is. 13:8 They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame.

And Jeremiah said...

Jer. 6:24 We have heard the report of it; Our hands are limp. Anguish has seized us, pain as of a woman in childbirth.

Here in verse 14, the Lord is speaking of His return, which is in the end times, but also of the intensity with which He will come back. Like a woman going ballistic in the delivery room, the Lord will return with frenzied furor.

42:15-16 The Destroyer And The Rescuer

When the Lord's judgment is poured out upon this planet, the mountains will be laid waste. John saw that day, and wrote,

Rev. 16:20 ...every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

When Jesus Christ comes back, He will brutally destroy all those who oppose Him, yet will gather the Jews to Himself. He is the Destroyer, and He is the Rescuer.

I want you to notice something: God is not shy about playing both parts. He constantly tells us of His love, mercy, compassion, and grace. But He also freely speaks about His judgment, wrath, intolerance, and anger.

God never paints a one-sided picture of himself, and never pulls any punches regarding the reality of His wrath. With that in mind, I find it very sad that we often want to "soften the blow" of things God has been so specific about. Saints, He's never asked us to do that. We've got to represent Him the way He's represented Himself.

- We're often hesitant to answer people's questions honestly about the brutal realities of life. But God lays it all out there on the line. For example, He said to Moses,

Ex. 4:11 ...“Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”

- We're quick to give God glory for healing, but frequently avoid the question of blindness or deafness. Saints, God takes credit for it all!

- We want to tell people about the joy of heaven, but are afraid to mention that people who refuse to go there are sent to hell. This isn't what God has told us to do.

Paul said,

2Cor. 5:20 ...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us...

I think we always need to ask ourselves, "Am I being a faithful ambassador, or am I diluting God's representation of Himself?"

42:17 Idolaters Put To Shame

If I were to start talking to a Barbie doll, I'm guessing that most people would think I was crazy. Some folks would even mock me to my face, trying to humiliate me.

And yet, throughout the centuries, idolatry has been considered normal! Carving our own gods, bowing down before them, speaking to them, and appealing to them for help.

Certainly, we know that what idolaters do is stupid and shameful. But the day is coming when they will be put to shame, or literally, "will be ashamed." They themselves will realize in the presence of God that their little statues were the sorriest substitute for deity they could have imagined.

42:18-21 Blind Servant, Deaf Messenger

This gets really confusing to read. Immediately, we assume that "my servant" is Jesus, who was called this back in verse one.

But the "My Servant" who is Jesus is a healer of the blind (Isa. 42:7). This servant is blind, this messenger is deaf. All because he will

not observe or hear the Lord's commands.

And so we see that this servant is not Jesus - it is the nation of Israel, the Jews. In stark contrast the Jesus the Servant of the Lord, the Jews were terrible servants to God. Though the Law they were given was great and glorious, they refused to obey it. As a result, they would be carried off into captivity.

42:22-23 Who Will Listen?

Because of their sin, the Jews stopped operating under the covenant protection of God. Instead of receiving blessings, they received curses. Their enemies continually attacked, often driving them from the cities of the Promised Land which God had originally given to them.

Ultimately, they were taken away by the Babylonians, not to return for seventy years. But how many of the Jews would repent because of this adversity? The question is asked,

Is. 42:23 Who among you will give ear to this? Who will give heed and listen hereafter?

42:24-25 Was It Not The Lord?

And so Isaiah challenges his people with a question: "Who exactly is it that allowed us to be plundered? Don't you think it was God? And why did He allow this? Because we sinned against Him and went our own way."

It has always been exceedingly unpopular to attribute anything bad to the Lord. Last week, TV evangelist Pat Robertson insinuated that Ariel Sharon's stroke might have been the fruit of sin. Robertson said, "He was dividing God's land, and I would say, 'Woe unto any prime minister of Israel who takes a similar course to appease the EU, the United Nations or the United States of America,' God says, 'This land belongs to Me, and you'd better leave it alone.'"

This of course brought a ton of backlash against Pat Robertson and all who are associated with him.

So you can imagine the grief that was given to the prophets when they said,

Is. 42:24-25 Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they were not willing to walk, and whose law they did not obey? So He poured out on him the heat of His anger and the fierceness of battle; And it set him aflame all around, yet he did not recognize it; And it burned him, but he paid no attention

Are you willing to take the heat for calling sin, "sin," and saying that God's wrath is poured out upon it? Please note: I'm not saying to go around proclaiming that every world leaders' sickness is a curse of God. But I am saying that God has made his feelings about sin and the consequences of it known. So, will we be His ambassadors, or just deaf messengers?