

God Steps In
Isaiah 59:15b-21

March 4, 2012

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A. Introduction

1. the first part of Isaiah 59

a. in its historic perspective

- (A) tells how wickedness had permeated the land of Judah
- (B) the visible, the nominal people of God of that day
- (C) in such a fashion that it had affected and polluted
- (D) the true people of God, God's assembly, His church of that time
- (E) so that '[... truth is lacking; And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey. ...](#)' (Isaiah 59:15) – those who did not give in to the prevailing vices of the day became the victims of those who would mock and scoff at them
- (F) that was a time of injustice and oppression of God's true people

b. in its current application, as we looked at 2 weeks ago,

- (A) it is prophetic of the degenerate state of this world, this nation
- (B) sin's effect upon the nominal people of God of today
- (C) the visible church, greatly fallen away from its historic faith
- (D) so that even the true people of God – the church invisible
- (E) has been infected by their deception – '[truth is lacking](#)', v 15
- (F) and those who remain true to the Scriptures – holding them to be the inerrant and infallible truth of the eternal God – are mocked and scoffed at as being behind the times
- (G) this is a time of injustice and oppression of God's true people

2. Isaiah, by the prophetic Spirit of the Lord,

a. is preparing God's people for the day when God will step in

b. the words spoken go far beyond any return of the exiles from Babylon or the punishment met out to the Jewish nation by the Romans

c. they speak of the times at the end of the age; we shall see that as we make reference to the NT Scriptures

- d. they speak of when God will step in to correct injustice and to remove oppression of His people once and for all
- e. two thousand years ago, God stepped into mankind, as the spotless Lamb of God to bear the sins of mankind
- f. God is going to step into mankind again, as Christ returns, not this time as the Lamb, but as the victorious Lion of Judah.

B. The Amazement of God.. 59:15b-16a

1. 15b ... Now the Lord saw, And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice. 16a And He saw that there was no man, And was astonished that there was no one to intercede ...
 - a. God is the God of righteousness; rightness is of great concern to Him
 - b. to this matter of right, God pays great attention
 - c. He looked, and He saw: and it was evil – displeasing – in His sight that there was no Mishpat
 - d. English does not have a single word that can translate that Hebrew word, Mishpat: it means both judgement and justice.
 - e. for things to be righteous – for right to prevail – there must be judgement of sinners and vindication of the godly
 - f. God looked and could see no man – no one worthy to take up this cause – no one willing to act for righteousness – no one to intercede
 - g. then comes a startling statement:

2. God was astonished; He wondered; He was appalled; He was desolated
 - a. how can God be described in such terms?
 - b. He is the God who knows the end from the beginning, sovereign over all of His creations – how can anything surprise God?
 - c. the Holy Spirit uses these words to grab our wandering attention
 - d. Evil is going to be dealt with. Yes, evil is going to be dealt with.
 - e. Right is going to prevail. Yes, right is going to prevail.

- f. God is personally seeing to it.
- g. 'For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?' (1 Peter 4:17)

C. The Armament of God 59:16b-17

1. 16b ... Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, And His righteousness upheld Him. 17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.
 - a. God is Who He always has been, and God is Who He always will be
 - b. but now, in the picture of Himself as a warrior, He will show to all the world Who He is and What His Person and Nature are like
 - c. so that although '3 ...in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.'" (2 Peter 3:3-4)
 - d. there is this answer, '9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.' (2 Peter 3:9-10)

2. God is described as a soldier putting on armour
 - a. His arm – symbol of His Power – will work deliverance
 - b. His righteousness – that unchangeable attribute of God
 - (A) will sustain or undergird His every action
 - (B) will be His body-armour preventing any deviation from right
 - c. His salvation – as a helmet – will be conspicuous, visible to all
 - d. He girds Himself for the battle, being clothed and wrapped
 - (A) in vengeance: taking up the cause of those being wronged; exercising His judicial wrath against those doing evil

(B) in zeal – for the glory of His Name; for the interests of His people

e. armed then in His holy Nature – God steps into battle

f. this is God the Son; this is Jesus Christ returned to earth: **'11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.'** (Revelation 19:11-13)

D. The Actions of God 59:18

1. **'According to their deeds, so He will repay, Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; To the coastlands He will make recompense.'**

a. when God steps in, as the words **'repay'** and **'recompense'** show, he will execute justice and judgement; measure for measure according to the evils committed

b. in Revelation 18:6-7 God's angel cries out respecting Babylon, that city which represents this world system, **'6 Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. 7 To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; ...'**

c. God's actions are not only **'vengeance,'** executed on behalf of His true people, but also the application of His wrath against the human and spiritual enemies of Him and His people

(A) verse 18 itself is unclear whether those enemies include wicked people who are part of natural Israel, mere descendants to Jacob

(B) but elsewhere in Scripture it is made clear: as in words similar to those following, Jesus said, **'11 I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; 12 but the sons of the kingdom (i.e. of natural Israel) will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'** (Matthew 8:11-12)

2. God is going to deal with all evil among all mankind, for as

- a. that passage in Revelation continues, '14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND Lord OF LORDS.'" (Revelation 19:14-16)
- b. God will deal with our enemy for the sake of judgement and justice; but He also does it for His own Name's sake, that there may be

E. The Acknowledgement of God 59:19-20

- 1. '19 So they will fear the name of the Lord from the west And His glory from the rising of the sun, For He will come like a rushing stream Which the wind of the Lord drives. 20 "A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the Lord.'

 - a. we have already noted Jesus' words in this respect
 - b. like words are found in Revelation 15:3-4, '3 ... they (the victorious overcomers of the beast) sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! 4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.'"
 - c. The last part of verse 19 can equally well be translated, as for example in the NKJV, '... When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.'
 - (A) regardless of translation, the intent is clear: God is in charge
 - (B) the flocking of the nations to worship God is of God's doing
 - (C) it is His gathering of His people to Himself
 - (D) and it is particularly of His gathering of a repentant Israel, 'those who turn from transgression in Jacob:'
 - d. for Paul uses the last part of the verse to affirm the final salvation of the elect of Israel in Romans 11:25-27, '25b a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "the Deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove

ungodliness from Jacob. 27 this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins." ... 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.'

F. The Agreement of God 59:21

1. "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the Lord: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the Lord, "from now and forever."
 - a. first note that this is a very solemn statement
 - (A) it follows the solemn words of the preceding verse: 'declares the Lord' or 'the declaration of Yahweh;' these words are akin to 'the mouth of the Lord has spoken it' – an affirmation that it will stand
 - (B) then in this verse it is not once but twice stated: 'says the Lord'
 - (C) God puts His signature on these words; they shall be carried out
 - b. then note that this agreement – this covenant – belongs to God
 - (A) in the Hebrew the verse starts with one compound word
 - (1) it can be translated 'and I,' 'but I,' 'even I,' or 'as for me.'
 - (2) God put the focus of the verse on His own self
 - (B) 'this is My covenant' says the Lord
 - (C) the Lord is the source of this agreement
 - (D) the Lord is the One defining the terms of this agreement
 - (E) and, the Lord will carry out this agreement
 - c. this agreement is made by the Lord 'with them' which we observed has a particular application to Israel
2. but then goes on to cover the promises of the new covenant
 - a. the indwelling Spirit of God; the indwelling Word of God
 - b. the Redeemer is coming, the Redeemer who is 'to Zion', i.e., that there exists a possessive relationship between Him and Zion, God's people
 - c. this new agreement or covenant is made by the shed blood of Christ

- (A) the old covenant made with the nation Israel at Sinai pointed forward to this new covenant; the old was but foreshadow
- (B) this is the fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham, that in his Seed, that is Seed, singular as we are instructed in Galatians 3:16, being Jesus Christ, all the nations of the earth should be blessed
- (C) this agreement is that we '[... are no longer strangers and aliens, but ... are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household](#)' (Ephesians 2:19); we are the household of faith, the Israel of God
- d. this agreement or covenant is for those who trust in Christ, '[... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.](#)' (Romans 5:5)
- e. and to us also has been given the Living Word, whose words brings life, because we trust in Him.

G. Conclusion

1. the Redeemer, we are promised, is coming: '[so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.](#)' (Hebrews 9:28) – look to Him in faith, lest He come and find you unforgiven, an enemy.

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AV Authorized (King James) Version
NAS New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NKJV New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan
 Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;
EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans
K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch
Kerux – The sermon and illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick to be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com.