



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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# Outline of the Book of Isaiah

- I. Warning of Judgment on Israel (1-39)
- II. The Promise of Future Hope in the New Jerusalem (40-66)
  - A. The Announcement of Hope (40-48)
  - B. The Servant Fulfills God's Mission (49-55)
  - C. The Servants Inherit God's Kingdom (56-66)

# The Servants Inherit God's Kingdom (Isaiah 56-66)

- There is a *chiastic* structure to chapters 56-66, of which chapters 60-62 form the centerpiece:
  - A. Obedient foreigners (56:1-8)
  - B. Necessity of ethical righteousness (56:9-59:15a)
  - C. Divine warrior (59:15b-21)
    - D. Jerusalem as the light of the world (60:1-62:12)
    - C' Divine warrior (63:1-6)
    - B' Necessity of ethical righteousness (63:7-66:17)
  - A' Obedient foreigners (66:18-24)

# The Wrath of the Divine Warrior (63:1-6)

- In chapter 63, Isaiah moves from talking about the future when the light will have dawned on a redeemed Israel, and through them on the whole world, to a sobering description of what must take place if that light is to dawn.
- In Isaiah 63:1-6, we will be looking at the ***Divine Warrior*** – the one who God will use to defeat every enemy of his people, including the most dangerous enemy: sin.
- Because of the physical and military imagery used in these verses, you might think that what is intended here is an announcement that God will defeat all the nations who oppress Israel in the future.
- That is certainly true, but it goes beyond that.
- This is made clear by what is said in the remainder of the book.

# The Wrath of the Divine Warrior (63:1-6)

- In previous sections of the book, we saw how the LORD's Servant dealt with the sin that exists ***within*** the hearts and lives of ***his people*** by his ***own*** shed blood in a substitutionary sacrifice (Isaiah 53).
- Today Isaiah describes in vivid poetic language how God will ***destroy*** the ***enemies*** of him and his people.
- Thus, the blood that stains that we see on the garments of the Victor described in today's text (63:1,3) is the blood of sinners from ***all*** nations, ***including*** those within his own nation, who have ***defied*** him.

# The Wrath of the Divine Warrior (63:1-6)

- This defiant character of God's enemies is symbolized in this text by the nation of *Edom* (63:1), similar to the way Edom was used in an earlier passage in the book:
  - *[The LORD] says, “Indeed, my sword has slaughtered heavenly powers. Look, it now descends on Edom, on the people I will annihilate in judgment.” The LORD’s sword is dripping with blood... For the LORD is holding a sacrifice in Bozrah, a bloody slaughter in the land of Edom... Their land is drenched with blood... For the LORD has planned a day of revenge, a time when he will repay Edom for her hostility toward Zion.* (Isaiah 34:5-8)

# The Wrath of the Divine Warrior (63:1-6)

- In our text we will see that the responsibility to destroy God's enemies falls to the divine warrior (Isaiah 63:3,5 – “*all by myself... I looked, but there was no one to help*” ) and him ***alone***.
- Because he ***alone*** is the one who does not have to die for his own sins (53:4-10).
- He ***alone*** is the ***righteous Judge***, who is ***without sin***.
- The purpose for this destruction is to make “*redemption*” and “*salvation*” (63:4-5) available for his people.
- Because until sin and those who propagate it are ***utterly defeated***, the ultimate salvation that God has planned for his people cannot come about – sin and all of its effects ***cannot*** and ***will not*** exist in God's eternal kingdom.

# The Wrath of the Divine Warrior (63:1-6)

63:1 *Who is this who comes from Edom,  
dressed in bright red, coming from  
Bozrah? Who is this one wearing royal  
attire, who marches confidently  
because of his great strength? “It is I,  
the one who [speaks in righteousness],  
and who is able to deliver!”<sup>2</sup> Why are  
your clothes red? Why do you look like  
someone who has stomped on grapes  
in a vat?*

# The Wrath of the Divine Warrior (63:1-6)

63:3 *"I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments and stained all my clothes. <sup>4</sup> [for the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.] <sup>5</sup> I looked, but there was no one to help; I was shocked because there was no one offering support. So my right arm accomplished deliverance; my raging anger drove me on. <sup>6</sup> I trampled nations in my anger; I made them drunk in my rage; I splashed their blood on the ground."*

**63:1** *Who is this who comes from Edom, dressed in bright red, coming from Bozrah? Who is this one wearing royal attire, who marches confidently because of his great strength? “It is I, the one who [speaks in righteousness], and who is able to deliver!”*

- A watchman (see Isaiah 62:6) sees a figure striding up from the direction of Edom in the south, from Bozrah, its capital.<sup>1</sup>
- Edom was the long time enemy of Judah, so much so that it often serves (as it does here) as a symbol of Israel’s enemies (cf. 34:5ff.; Ps 137:7; Ezek 35:10-15; Amos 1:6, 11; Obad 10-16).<sup>1</sup>
- This figure is obviously someone to be reckoned with: he is splendidly garbed in bright-colored garments, “*who marches confidently*” with “*great strength*” as though having just won a great victory.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oswalt, John N.. The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66 (The NIC on the OT) (pp. 596-597).

<sup>2</sup> Leupold, H. C. – *Exposition of Isaiah, Volume 2* (pp. 338–339)

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- Such a person must clearly be challenged. “*Who is this who comes from Edom?*” the watchman calls.<sup>1</sup>
- The answer leaves **no doubt** as to who this figure is. “*It is I, the one who [speaks in righteousness], and who is able to deliver!*”<sup>1</sup>
- It is the LORD himself!<sup>2</sup>
- The characteristic by which he chooses to identify himself is that he is “*the one who speaks...*”<sup>1</sup>
- From Gen 1:3 to Rev 21:5 the main characteristic of the God of the Bible is that he “*speaks*”, revealing his character, his ways, and his will to his creatures.<sup>1</sup>

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- Indeed, it says he is the one who “*speaks in righteousness*,” that is, he speaks with authority, that righteousness may be upheld and prevail throughout the world.
- A part of his assignment is to see to it that they who have been wronged are set to right.
- In this respect he “*is able to deliver*.”
- Another way of describing this particular function of the divine warrior is to say that he directs the affairs of history.

63:2 *Why are your clothes red? Why do you look like someone who has stomped on grapes in a vat?*

- In the second exchange between the two characters, the Warrior has gotten close enough for the sentry to see that his garments had not been made of red cloth, but that they were that color because they have been “reddened” (*'ādōm*, from the same root as Edom) as though splattered with blood.
- Since he was approaching from Edom, which was well known for its wine production, the watchman compares the state of the Warrior’s clothes to those of “*someone who has stomped on grapes in a vat [i.e. a winepress]*”.

**63:2** *Why are your clothes red? Why do you look like someone who has stomped on grapes in a vat?*

- In that day, a winepress typically consisted of two cavities carved in rock.
- In the upper trough grapes were trodden on to extract their juice, which flowed into a lower receptacle.
- Stomping on the newly harvested grapes, or being too close to the process, could easily lead to one's clothing becoming stained.
- The watchman asks the approaching figure why he looks like "*like someone who has stomped on grapes in a vat*".

# Ancient Winepress

## Iron Age Wine Press

The wine press or ***purah***, was often carved into a graded area of bedrock by excavating a slightly sloping pit for the treading of grapes, connected to a deeper storage pit through a graded hole to collect the juices.



Vineyards were often separated by walls with a stone watchtower. The wine press was in close proximity, if not within, the vineyard.



Collection Vat



A canaanite jar like this one may have been used to store the wine. As the wine would ferment, the clay stopper would swell, sealing the jar.

Ancient winepress excavated south of Mount Hebron, Israel.

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# Ancient Winepress



**63:3** “*I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments and stained all my clothes.*

- The Warrior confirms that treading the wine trough is ***exactly*** what he has been doing.
- Although he does not explain the imagery here (he does in v. 6), no explanation is needed.
- He has attacked the enemies of his people and trodden them under foot like grapes, so that their lifeblood has spurted out and spattered his garments.

**63:3** “I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments and stained all my clothes.

- Why has he done this?
- Because of his “*anger*” and his “*rage*”.
- God is not the cool judge impartially handing down verdicts on persons in whom he has no personal interest.
- God is a Father whose children have been abused and mutilated.
- He is a King whose subjects have revolted and tried to usurp the throne.
- He is the Creator whose creations have perverted themselves into the very opposite of the things for which they were created.

63:3 “I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments and stained all my clothes.

- Aristotle's passionless Unmoved Mover is the farthest thing from the God of the Bible, whose love is more enduring than the mountains and whose fury is more white-hot than molten steel.
- Here, as the prophet has said again and again, God's rage is directed against those who would destroy and oppress his people.
- He is furious against all that would deprive them of the blessings he wishes to give them.
- The imagery is gruesome in its vividness; it says to us that we should do everything in our power to become part of his people and **not** be among his enemies.

63:3 “I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments and stained all my clothes.

- The **chief** idea in this verse is that there was **no one** to **help** the Warrior in his awful task (“*no one from the nations joined me*”).
- Who destroyed Edom? Was it Assyria, or Babylonia, or Persia, or another nation?
- No, Isaiah says, **none** of these peoples has accomplished God’s great historical purposes for him.

**63:3** “I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments and stained all my clothes.

- They may have been the **tools** that God used, but God **alone** accomplished the task, similar to what he says about the rescue of his people from Assyria in chapter 10:
  - *But can the ax boast greater power than the person who uses it? Is the saw greater than the person who saws? Can a rod strike unless a hand moves it? Can a wooden cane walk by itself? Therefore, the Lord, the LORD of Heaven's Armies, will send a plague among Assyria's proud troops, and a flaming fire will consume its glory. (Isaiah 10:15-16 NLT)*

**63:3** “I have stomped grapes in the winepress all by myself; no one from the nations joined me. I stomped on them in my anger; I trampled them down in my rage. Their juice splashed on my garments and stained all my clothes.

- The hope of the world lies solely in the hand of the one who “*speaks in righteousness.*” (vs.1)
- Until he defeats our enemies, both within and without, there is no hope for us.
- But when he ***does***, then the hope of the world is born anew.
- The importance of this thought for this section is seen in its being repeated here and in the parallel passage in 59:15b-21.
- How is it possible for the new Jerusalem of chapters 60-62 to exist?
- Only because the lone Warrior has ***made*** it possible.

63:4 [for the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.]

- Isaiah here gives the reason why God has acted, namely that the “*day of vengeance*” (i.e. the time for taking vengeance) was in His heart (i.e. in His plans and purposes) and the year of His redeemed had come.
- Just as there was a “*year when the LORD will show his favor*” (Isaiah 61:2), so also is there a “*year of [his] redeemed*”.
- And now that this “*year*” had arrived, the Lord will take vengeance upon the nations.
- The words “*day*” and “*year*” here simply mean time.

63:5 *I looked, but there was no one to help; I was shocked because there was no one offering support. So my right arm accomplished deliverance; my raging anger drove me on.*

- This verse compares the Lord to a man who is confronted by a tremendous task.
- In such a situation one almost *instinctively* looks for others to help him.
- It would seem that his is so clearcut a case of being in the right that there would be *many* who would flock to his side to help support a just cause.
- But there is *no* volunteer.
- The Lord must fall back on his *own* resources exclusively, and these resources are *more* than adequate: “[*his*] arm accomplished deliverance and [*his*] raging anger drove [*him*] on.”

**63:6** *I trampled nations in my anger; I made them drunk in my rage; I splashed their blood on the ground.*"

- Here we see:
  - The “*nations*” thrown into a winepress and “*trampled*”,
  - Nations made “*drunk*” with the wine of God’s wrath (cf. 51:22),
  - “*Blood*” running to the “*ground*” in streams from the veins of the guilty nations.
- We see a similar outpouring of the wrath of God described in the book of Revelation:
  - *So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the grapes from the vineyard of the earth and tossed them into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Then the winepress was stomped outside the city, and blood poured out of the winepress up to the height of horses' bridles for a distance of almost two hundred miles.* (Rev 14:19-20)

**63:6** *I trampled nations in my anger; I made them drunk in my rage; I splashed their blood on the ground.*"

- The judgment of God is grim business, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." (Gal 6:7)
- So ends the description of the Lord's Judgment on Edom.
- But, as noted earlier, the words are not be ***limited*** to Edom.
- **All** who display the spirit of Edom will suffer the judgment that this passage describes as falling upon Edom.
  - *Then I saw heaven opened and here came a white horse! The one riding it was called "Faithful" and "True," and with justice he judges and goes to war. His eyes are like a fiery flame and there are many diadem crowns on his head... He is dressed in clothing dipped in blood, and he is called the Word of God... From his mouth extends a sharp sword, so that with it he can strike the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod, and he stomps the winepress of the furious wrath of God, the All-Powerful. He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh: "King of kings and Lord of lords."* (Rev 19:11-16)

# Next Time

- I plan to cover *The LORD Rejects the Apostate Israelites (65:1-7)*

# Class Discussion Time

- Our passage today reminds us of the dreadful fate of the enemies of God.
- These kinds of passages should cause us to *tremble* knowing that we escaped such a fate.
- And they should cause us to *grieve* knowing that such a horrible fate awaits our unbelieving friends and family members.
- Does reading a passage like this make you want to reach out again to such friends and family members, even though you (hopefully) have tried many times in the past without success?
- By way of encouragement, do any of you have stories of someone you reached out to many times without success, but then one day they came around?

# Class Discussion Time

- A number of my commentaries were almost apologetic about this passage, fearful that people in our culture might read this and be turned away from believing in the goodness of God.
- Some expressed concern that people shouldn't read this and think that God is like some raving maniac who takes pleasure in the destruction of the unrighteous.
- Are *you* tempted to feel that way about this passage?
- Why is it that when people in our day do the kinds of things described in this passage we rightly view them as evil butchers, serial killers, etc. and yet God can do these things and still be considered righteous and holy?