



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"
ISAIAH 61:1

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 59

AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

Book of Isaiah

Summary of Chapter 59

No redemption without conversion. Chapter 59. Summary and Comments

This chapter seems to refer again to the period after the exile. He says that the arm of the Lord is not unable to save them, but their iniquities have separated them from Him and have caused His face to be hidden from them. For their hands are stained with blood, their lips have spoken lies, probably including false accusations in court. There they use "empty arguments." It sounds like ancient Greece where in court invalid arguments often carried the day.

So the prophet says they are like those who hatch eggs of a viper. Whoever eats such eggs will die. When an egg is broken, an adder comes out. They spin spider's webs, useless for clothing. Their thoughts aim at evil, they turn into crooked paths.

Interestingly, in Romans 3:15-17 St. Paul cites verses 7 and 8a as part of a sad litany of how low people have sunk. But commentators need to notice that Paul is not only using Semitic exaggeration, but also is making what can be called a focused picture, i.e., one in which the law is seen as making heavy demands, giving no help, and so everyone falls. We called it focused since the view is limited, as if one looked through a tube, and saw only what was framed by the circle of the tube. Yet, off to the side, outside the circle, was divine help even before Christ: if one used it, the result was the opposite (On focusing cf. Wm. Most <The Thought of St. Paul> esp. p. 186.

So the people say that justice is far from them. They look for light, but all is dark. They stumble and grope like the blind feeling their way along a wall. They look for God's just intervention (<mishpat>) but find none, and for deliverance (<yoshua>) in vain. For their offenses are many in the sight of God, and their sins are witnesses against them.

The next lines (15b to 18) are remarkable for the way words are used: "The Lord saw, and it was evil in His eyes, that there was no carrying out of right judgment (<mishpat> by His people), and He saw that there was no man [to help] and wondered that there was no one to intervene [on behalf of <sedaqah>]. So His own arm causes salvation for Him [<tosh'a lo>] and His moral rightness [<sedaqah>] it sustained Him. And He put on moral rightness [<sedaqah>] as a breastplate, and salvation [<yeshua>] as a helmet on His head. He clothed Himself with garments of executive vindication [<naqam>]. . . . According to deeds, accordingly He will repay. "

It is remarkable that in these lines we find three words - <sedaqah> -- <yeshua> (usually meaning <salvation>) - and <naqam> - which can turn in two directions, i.e., can mean favorable or unfavorable action by God. This is because the framework is the covenant. In Dt 11; 26 Moses told the people he was putting before them a blessing or a curse, according to whether they did or did not carry out the covenant. (Is 63:5 has a similar picture with similar wording. On this cf the appendix to Wm. Most <The Thought of St. Paul>).

When God makes things right (<naqam- executive action to correct things>) then people from East and West will fear the name of the Lord. Judgment will burst in like a flood that has been pent up. The Redeemer will come from Zion for those who repent. St. Paul in Romans 11:26 uses this line about the Redeemer from Zion to refer to the coming conversion of the Jews.

End of Chapter 59