

• The coming Saviour

1. Isaiah speaks first of the problem

There is a lack of

- Justice
- Righteousness
- Faithfulness
- Honesty

2. Isaiah speaks next of God's reaction

• No one righteous whose prayers God would answer

• God had to be intercessor and Saviour

• God comes as the Conqueror of sin

3. First he comes in judgement

• Righteousness covers His heart

• Salvation – helmet

• Determination to devastate sin

• Strict justice

In the prophecy of Isaiah we are ready for a further statement concerning the Saviour who is to come to save both Israel and the gentiles. Isaiah 56:1–59:13 have restated the need of Judah and Jerusalem, so now it is appropriate that the theme of the coming Saviour should also be restated.

1. Isaiah speaks first of the problem.

¹⁴So justice is driven back,
and righteousness stands at a distance;
for faithfulness has stumbled in the streets,
honesty cannot enter.

¹⁵Integrity has gone missing,
and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.

Four words pick out what we ought to look for in society: **justice** (*mishpat*, righteous decisions in accordance with God's will), **righteousness** (*tsedakah*, the habit of living in the light of the holiness of God), **faithfulness** (*emeth*, a combination of truthfulness and faithfulness to what one knows is true), **honesty** (*nakoach*, straightforwardness). This deficiency of justice, righteousness, faithfulness and honesty is typical of society as a whole; it has 'stumbled in the streets'. It also affects the individual, for any one person who 'shuns evil becomes a prey'.

2. Isaiah speaks next of God's reaction.

Yahweh looked and it was evil in his sight,
for there was no justice.

¹⁶He saw that there was no one,
he was appalled that there was no one to stand in the gap;
therefore his own arm worked salvation for him,
and his own righteousness sustained him.

Someone who 'stands in the gap' is not referring only to intercession (it is often taken in this way by modern 'intercessors'). The thought includes two ingredients, not one. The first thought is that there is no person who is righteous, and therefore (a second point) no one whose prayers God is likely to answer, no one who (like Noah) might be a saviour or rescuer of other people. Since there is no saviour, the only remedy is for God himself to be the intercessor and Saviour (a theme to be found in Isaiah 53).

Isaiah 59:17–19 describes in detail what God did. It comes to us in picture language. God is pictured as wearing appropriate clothes in which he comes as the mighty Conqueror of sin.

3. First he comes in judgement.

¹⁷He put on righteousness as his breastplate,
and the helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on the garments of vengeance as clothing
and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.

¹⁸According to what they have done, so will he pay
wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes;
even to the distant coastlands he will pay what they deserve.

His righteousness covers his heart. Salvation – the ultimate certainty of saving people – is worn as the helmet that covers his mind. Wrapped around him is the determination to punish and devastate sin. To the very corners of the world he will execute strict justice.

4. He comes also for the salvation of his people

• The Judge is Saviour

• Any opposition to salvation will be defeated

• Salvation will come from heaven to earth – for all who repent

5. Salvation is achieved through a Saviour

• Seed – the people of God are a family

• A covenant of generosity between God and His people

• The Spirit dwells in the restored people and the Word is given to them

4. He comes also for the salvation of his people.

¹⁹From the west, men will fear the name of Yahweh, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory.

When an adversary comes streaming in, the Spirit of Yahweh lifts a banner against him.

²⁰The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from rebellion' – oracle of Yahweh.

The Judge is also the Saviour. He comes to reveal his character as the Saviour; 'Yahweh' is 'the God who saves by the blood of a lamb'. Any opposition to his salvation will be defeated, for God will hold high a 'banner' at that point and all his forces of victory will converge to defeat the enemy.

The salvation will come from the heavenly Zion (heaven, the dwelling place of God) to the earthly Zion (Jerusalem, the place where Jesus died, the symbol of the people of God). It will be available to all but only those who turn in repentance towards the Saviour will actually experience it.

5. **Salvation is achieved through a Saviour.** Isaiah mentions a 'Redeemer'²¹. In verse 21 God speaks to him.

'As for me, this is my covenant with them,' says Yahweh. 'My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your seed, or from the mouths of the seed of their seed from this time on and for ever,' says Yahweh.

'Seed' is a word that goes back to the promise of Genesis 15:5: 'And he brought him [Abraham] outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your seed be."' It reminds us that the people of God are a family.

This salvation – says God – will be part of a 'covenant', a relationship between persons or peoples which comes to a climax when one or both of them swears an oath. There is more than one kind of 'covenant' but in this case it is clearly a covenant of generosity in which God relates to his people and eventually swears to them, 'I will indeed bless you' (to use the words of Genesis 22:17). The beneficiaries of the covenant are 'them' — the worldwide people of God. The Mediator of the covenant is the one to whom God speaks: 'you', the Redeemer, the One who saves his people by purchasing them at great cost. He does his work by his Spirit, his Word and (eventually) by his people. The Spirit indwells the restored people. The Word is given to them. So the Servant's newly saved and restored 'Israel' (not a political entity but the worldwide people of God) is used by God to extend the message everywhere.

²¹ 59:20



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