

## The Gospel of Isaiah

by Pastor Marty

This newsletter's a bit different than the previous ones. For this month, we are going to do something of a Bible study. I want to go over some parts of Isaiah because it holds a key to the Gospel that many people miss. Many of the Old Testament prophets saw things about Jesus and wrote what they glimpsed, but Isaiah saw a few things more clearly than many others. In order to identify what is truly super-natural in his text, we need to be honest about what was not. I have heard how Isaiah has 66 chapters, corresponding to the books of the Bible. We have to be careful about the significance we place on that, for when it was first written, it was written in scroll format. There were no chapters or verses at all. It was like a single very long letter. The distinctions of the chapters and verses were added many centuries later. Now, there are some surprising correlations between those 66 chapter separations and the 66 books of the Bible, as we will see. The point is that the godly men and women who played a part in the addition of chapter and verse numbers in the medieval ages might have done it intentionally as they saw some of the things I will point out, or they may have not been aware of it—making it an instance of God supernaturally inspiring them to do things without their being conscious of it. Either way, the distinction is real, but it may or may not have been intentional just as it may or may not have been totally supernatural.

***The distinctions are real whether or not they are intentional or supernatural.***

Usually when people think of the book of Isaiah in relation to Jesus' ministry, there are two passages that come to mind: the passage of the suffering servant, and the passage that Jesus read when He began His ministry. (It is interesting to see that Jesus began His ministry by quoting a passage that came *after* the one

describing His crucifixion; I think there is a very significant reason for that, as we shall see). However, there is much, much more about the Gospel in Isaiah than most people realize. Also, it was when I looked at the book in light of the chapter distinctions that I noticed what I will be describing. Again, whether or not the chapter numbers were added to reflect the content or were "coincidence" arranged by the Holy Spirit, the second half of the book can open our eyes to the extent of our redemption and salvation.

***The second half of Isaiah can open up our eyes to the extent of our redemption.***

We see the beginning of a "coincidence" in chapter 40. (I will be quoting from the NASB). *A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God"* (Isaiah 40:3). This is the verse quoted by John the Baptist when people asked him to identify himself. Matthew writes of this prophetic word in the 40th book of the Bible—the first book of the New Testament. In other words, our first reference to a figure from the New Testament is in the chapter that does correspond to the first book when that figure is mentioned. This gives a bit more meaning to the verses immediately prior to this quotation: *"Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God. "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins"* (Isaiah 40:1-2). God is proclaiming "good news" to the people, telling them that the time of their bondage to sin is coming to an end. He is now going to not only remove their iniquity but also give them more than they deserve.

***Isaiah 40, which corresponds to the book of Matthew, presents John the Baptist.***

We see this “good news” explained in a bit more detail in the next chapter. Beginning in Isaiah 41, God further explains that He is bringing redemption to the people. *“But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend, You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts . . . Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. ... For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’ ... The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, And their tongue is parched with thirst; I, the LORD, will answer them Myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights And springs in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water And the dry land fountains of water”* (Isaiah 41:8-18). What we find is that John the Baptist, who came before Jesus to prepare the way for Him, proclaimed a message of the coming redemption—and Isaiah 40 described John while chapter 41 described a message of the coming redemption of the Lord.

***Chapter 41 of Isaiah introduces John’s basic message of the coming redemption.***

Of course, all of this could simple be just a coincidence. We could be reading into this a meaning and a significant that does not exist ... so how do we know if there is something here? After John the Baptist appeared and preached a message of repentance and coming redemption to Israel, the very next figure to show up on the scene was Jesus Himself. If the chapters in the book of Isaiah do relate to the New Testament Gospel, then chapter 42 needs to somehow be related to Jesus. We then read the following: *“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth*

*justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. ... I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon”* (Isaiah 42:1-7). This passage clearly represents Jesus, for the Gospel writers quote this passage about Him.

***Chapter 42 of Isaiah presents the figure of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord.***

If Isaiah is providing a glimpse into the Gospel, then we need to see a relationship with Jesus going forward. We know that Isaiah 53 describes the crucifixion, so that leaves us with 10 chapters between Jesus being presented to Israel and the end of His ministry. The question is whether these next 10 chapters fit our thesis of Isaiah is describing the Gospel. He then writes, *But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you ... Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert ... I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance, let us argue our case together; State your cause, that you may be proved right* (Isaiah 43:1-26). God’s message here is that He is with us throughout the storm, provides us with new life, and forgives our sins.

***Chapter 43 of Isaiah summarizes some aspects of the life and message of Jesus.***

In order to limit this newsletter's length to a manageable size, I am not going to devote a separate section for each of the 9 chapters leading to the crucifixion; instead, I am going to summarize them with a list of verses that you can read yourself and see if they do fit into and describe the earthly life and ministry of Jesus.

## Isaiah 44

- God will provide (1-5)
- Some will not understand (9-20)
- God will forgive (21-23)

## Isaiah 45

- God will make a way (2-7)
- God's Servant will offer grace (12-13)
- God will save all who call on Him (18-25)

## Isaiah 46

- God is faithful and unchanging (3-13)

## Isaiah 47

- God will judge wickedness and sin (1-15)

## Isaiah 48

- God hates hypocrisy & pride (1-11)
- God will deliver His people (12-16)
- God will lead His people (17-19)

## Isaiah 49

- God called Jesus "Son" (1-4)
- God called Jesus "Lord" (5-7)
- God called Jesus "Redeemer" (8-13)
- God will restore (14-21)

In these 6 chapters, we see numerous aspects of the "good news" Jesus not only proclaimed but also performed in His earthly ministry up to the time when He was arrested in Gethsemane.

***Isaiah 44-49 describes numerous aspects of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus.***

Chapter 50 of Isaiah begins to describe the sufferings of Jesus after He was arrested. As we know, He went through both interrogations and beatings before He was actually crucified. Isaiah says, *I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps Me,*

*Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed. He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a case against Me? Let him draw near to Me. Behold, the Lord GOD helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them. Who is among you that fears the LORD, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God (Isaiah 50:6-10).* We can see Jesus face His accusers and refuse to turn away from the truth. He stood before the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate with nobody else standing at His side, knowing that He was doing the work of His Father to accomplish righteousness.

***Chapter 50 of Isaiah describes Jesus as He stands resolute before His accusers.***

In the next 2 chapters, God proclaims to His people that salvation has come to them if they will turn to Him. First Isaiah writes, *Pay attention to Me, O My people, And give ear to Me, O My nation; For a law will go forth from Me, And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples. My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; The coastlands will wait for Me, And for My arm they will wait expectantly. Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment And its inhabitants will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not wane (Isaiah 51:4-6).* God explains that He is setting up a new way of righteousness for all people. He then states that it is something He Himself has done. *Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, "Here I am." How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And*

*brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:6-7). At this point, you may notice that Isaiah even uses the term "good news" in the passage; it is not simply a New Testament concept! God also makes it clear that Jesus will suffer to bring this "good news" to fruition, for Isaiah then writes, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand (Isaiah 52:14-15).*

***Isaiah 51-52 describes the salvation being accomplished through Jesus' death.***

Chapter 53 focuses on the suffering of Jesus on the cross, including the often-quoted crucifixion verse, *"But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5). However, the entire chapter deals with His suffering in our place. This is extremely important because it begins to describe more than just His death. This is a weakness in what many Christians have been taught. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, but *that is not all* that He did. If dying in our place so that we could be forgiven was the point, He would not have had to be beaten and scourged; crucifixion would have been enough. Much, much more occurred when He took our place, and if we do not read Isaiah correctly, we will miss it. Remember, the Old Testament *was* the Bible for Jesus and the apostles; they didn't have a New Testament. There is a reason they often referenced Isaiah.

***Isaiah 53 does not just describe Jesus' death: it begins an exposition of salvation.***

Between Chapter 54 and chapter 61, we find more than just a bunch of verses intended to fill space. These chapters go into detail of all

the various aspects of salvation. Again, in order to keep the newsletter from getting too long, I will summarize some sections for you to read.

Isaiah 54

- Given a new family (1-3)
- No more shame and rejection (4-8)
- Forever accepted and loved (9-10)
- Protection and favor (11-17)

Isaiah 55

- Unmerited grace and favor (1-5)
- Everyone is invited (6-7)
- Supernatural wisdom and power (8-11)
- Joy (12-13)

Isaiah 56

- Restoration and return for sorrow (1-5)
- Everyone is accepted (6-8)

Isaiah 57

- Evil will be judged (1-13)
- A holy God will offer grace (14-21)

Isaiah 58

- A call to a new heart (1-12)
- Reward for honoring God (13-14)

Isaiah 59

- Sin separates people from God (1-14)
- God provides the redemption (15-21)

Isaiah 60

- The Church introduced (1-3)
- The Church before the world (4-14)
- The Church triumphant (15-22)

Jesus accomplished much, much more than just forgiveness of sins; He provided a full, new life.

***Isaiah 54-60 shows that Jesus provided much more than forgiveness in salvation.***

Isaiah 61 lists the passage Jesus quoted when He started His ministry: *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me* (Isaiah 61:1). It describes the Holy Spirit's power. Why isn't this passage located in chapter 43? It comes after Isaiah describes the Church because it is about Pentecost! Jesus has given us the same Spirit who empowered Him in His ministry. Chapters 61-66 are about us.