



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

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTERS 63-65

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 63-65

Day of retribution. 63:1-6. Summary and Comments

Isaiah asks; Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah with garments stained red. Bozrah was the capital of Edom, often used to stand for nations opposed to the Lord - especially since Edom had refused Israel passage on its return from Egypt, and had taken advantage of the weakness of Judah when the Babylonians took Jerusalem. Edom seems to have been understood to mean <red>: Genesis 25. 30. The figure coming however in spite of the blood is robed in splendor. He replies, in righteousness (<sedaqah>), mighty to save.

even without visible adherence.

d) John Paul II, in <Redemptoris missio>, 10 affirms the same thing: "The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. . . . For such people [those who do not know of the Church] salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church. . . ." We are proposing to fill-in on that "mysterious relationship", and agree that those we have described are not "formally" part of the Church, since they do not explicitly and externally adhere, but yet in some sense are members, for they could not otherwise be saved.

In contrast, the prophet complains of those who are unfaithful to God, who offer sacrifice in gardens, and keep vigil at night (probably for necromancy) and eat the flesh of pigs, and even say they are thereby made holy and sacred: "Keep away from me. I am holy." We think again of What Ezekiel saw in his vision in his chapter 8.

So God says: Such people are like smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps on burning. So I will not be silent, but will repay them with full payment for their deeds.

Then the prophet thinks of the others, the remnant who are faithful: Just as when a cluster of grapes still has some juice in it, and so we do not destroy it, so God will not destroy all, but will save the remnant. He will bring forth descendants from Jacob and Judah. From the plain of Sharon (In the west by the sea) to the Valley of Achor (in the east by Jericho) will be pasture for their flocks.

But the others, the unfaithful, who spread a table for Fortune and mix bowls of wine for Destiny -- He will "destine" them for the sword. He called (as in verse 1 above) but they did not hear. Yet His servants will eat and not go hungry. They will sing, and He will give them a new name (cf. Apoc/Rev. 2. 17) - a new name stands or a new role). They will be so blessed that people invoking a blessing will say: "May you be blessed like these. "

Behold, I am creating a new heaven and a new earth (cf. 2 Peter 3. 13 and Apoc. /Rev. 21. 1). The former things will be forgotten. I will make Jerusalem a delight, its people a joy. The sound of weeping will no longer be heard there. There will be in it no infant who lives only a few days. If a man dies at age 100 he will be thought to be cursed, for not living out his lifespan. I will answer them even before they call. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw, while the serpent eats dust. -- A recollection of the idyllic image given above in 11:6-9 and of the serpent in Genesis 3. 14 condemned to eat dust.

End of Chapters 63-65

definition of faith, and could be called Christian, for He followed the Spirit of Christ, even though He did not know it was the Spirit of Christ that wrote this on his heart.

Further Socrates in following that Spirit of Christ was accepting and following the Spirit of Christ. Now in Romans 8:9 we learn that if one does have and follow the Spirit of Christ, he <belongs to> Christ. So Socrates did belong to Christ. But then, in Paul's terms: to belong to Christ means to be a member of Christ, which in turn means to be a member of the Church. So Socrates had a substantial, even though not formal, membership in the Church. (Not formal, since there was no visible adherence).

In accord with this, in <Lumen gentium> 8. Vatican II said that the Church "subsists" in the Catholic Church. For persons like Socrates could be substantially members, by following what the Spirit wrote on their hearts.

Socrates followed a pagan religion. That religion was not a component part of the Church. Yet Socrates personally was a member. The same is true of those who follow a Protestant religion. That Protestant church is not a component part of the Catholic Church, yet its adherents can be members of the Catholic Church, as Socrates was.

So one reason we can call the Church a <mystery> with LG 3 (Lumen Gentium- No salvation outside of the Church) is that there is more to it than what meets the eye, it can include those who are in this way substantial members.

In saying there can be members without visible adherence, we are not contradicting the documents of the Church, but adding to them:

a) Pius IX, in <Quanto conficiamur moerore> of August 10, 1863 said "God. . . in His supreme goodness and clemency, by no means allows anyone to be punished with eternal punishments who does not have the guilt of voluntary fault." But some who do not visibly adhere meet this description. Pius IX in the very next sentence repeats the necessity of the Church for salvation, so those who meet these requirement must in some way be members of the Church.

b) On August 9, 1949, the Holy Office, by order of Pius XII, condemned the interpretation given by Fr. Leonard Feeney of "no salvation outside the Church" and said, citing the same Pope's Mystical Body Encyclical: "It is not always required that one be actually incorporated, but this at least is required that one adhere to it in wish and desire" which can be "a desire of which he is not aware" contained in the good dispositions mentioned.

c) Vatican II in LG #16 explicitly said the same: "Those who without their own fault do not know of the Gospel of Christ and His Church, but yet seek God with sincere heart, and try, under the influence of grace, to carry out His will in practice, known to them through the dictate of conscience, can attain eternal salvation." To attain that, one needs to be in some way a member of the Church. Socrates was, so are many others,

He is asked why his garments are red. He replies that He has trodden the winepress alone, no one from the nations helped. Here treading the winepress stands for executing the wrath of God (Apoc/Rev. 19. 15). He says that the day of naqam was in his heart. <Naqam> stands for executive action of the authority to set things right, whether favorable or unfavorable effect is required. It does not really mean <vengeance>, as versions commonly put it, for that word stands for immoral hate. Hence here he adds: the year of redemption has come. <Naqam> means benefit to God's friends, punishment for His enemies.

Then he said: I looked, and there was no one to help - the very wording is much the same as that which we saw above in 59. 15. God in His wrath made them drunk, on the wine of His wrath.

Prayer and Lament. 63. 7 - 64. 12. Summary and Comments

The prophet says; I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord-- really, the plural of <hesed>, the ways in which He observes what He has pledged in the covenant, according to His compassion (<rahamah>) and many kindnesses (<hesed again>). In all their distress, He was so compassionate that even He was distressed seeing their suffering. So an angel of His presence saved them and carried them as in days of old. Some think the angel of His presence is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. But this is unclear, though we grant that in Malachi 3. 1 the messenger of the Covenant is probably the Lord Himself. He <carried them>, recalls Exodus 19. 4, in which He said He carried them in leaving Egypt as on eagle's wings.

In spite of this they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit. Does this mean the Third Person of the Holy Trinity? Not impossible, but less likely so early as this in history. As a result of this rebellion, instead of helping them, He actually fought against them.

Then the people recalled the days of Moses when He brought them out of Egypt and through the sea.

So Isaiah begs: Look down from heaven and see. Where are your zeal (<qinah> intense love, like that of a jealous lover) and your might? Your compassion is withheld from us.

But you, Lord, are our Father. Even if Abraham did not know us, or Jacob did not acknowledge us: you are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name. Redeemer is <goel>, that next of kin who had the right and duty to rescue his kinsmen in great distress. In the covenant, as the blood sprinkling suggested, God pledged to act as though their kinsman and <goel>.

Therefore: Why, O Lord, do you cause us to wander from your ways and harden our hearts? This is a common Hebrew way of speaking, which attributes to direct action of God that which He really only permits. Cf. Amos 3. 6: "Is there an evil in the city which the Lord has not caused"? Or 1 Samuel 4. 3.

So he pleads: Return for your servants, for your inheritance. We are yours from of old.

Now the prophet exclaims: O, I wish you would break open the heavens and come down, while the mountains would tremble before you. Since ancient times no one has heard nor has any ear perceived, no eye has seen any God but you who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him. -- St. Paul modified this considerably in 1 Cor 2. 9 to make it read: "Eye has not seen nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him." Paul is not quoting Isaiah closely at all. Some early writers -- Origen, Ambrosiaster and St. Jerome, thought he was quoting from <The Apocalypse of Elijah>. But this text is not found in any copy we possess of that inter-testamental writing. Most likely Paul was acting much as the rabbis often did: he is free in his use of Scripture, and does not normally take into account the original setting of the words. (Similarly today, the line is often used to speak of Heaven: Neither Paul nor Isaiah had that in mind).

So he goes on saying: All of us have become like one who is unclean. Everything we have done to be righteous is like the rags of a menstruating woman. Some Protestants here have tried to use these words to say we are so totally corrupt that all our best works are evil. They forget several things: 1) 64. 7 says: "There is no one who calls on your name." But Isaiah and his followers did. 2) 40. 2 said that Israel "has received double for all her sins." But that would be unjust. So we see strong, and common Semitic exaggeration here. We compare 13:9-10 on the fall of Babylon, and 34. 4 on the fall of Edom, and Ezek 7-8 on the punishment of Egypt - all three use language much in line with Matthew 24. 29 in which the sun is darkened, and the moon does not give its light, and the stars fall from the sky. In the seeming face value of these texts nothing like it happened in reality: more Semitic exaggeration.

Furthermore, Luther did not really say what these objectors think. In what he considered his major work, <The Bondage of the Will> (Tr. J. J. Packer, and O. R. Johnston, Revell Co., Old Tappan NJ, 1957) Luther said on p. 273 that we have no free will. On pp. 103-04 he said man's will is like a beast. If God rides, it does good. If Satan rides, it does evil. A man has nothing to say about which rider gets on. So he goes to heaven or hell without any control over it. And God damns most people: p. 101. So on p. 314 he said that in this God is "damning the undeserving". Few Lutherans or other Protestants know what Luther really held!

Then, in a more consoling tone he says that the Lord is their Father (cf. 63. 16), ? We are the clay, and He is the potter. Of course Isaiah does not mean, like Luther, that we have no free will. He means that God can guide us and affect our actions in many ways without violating our free will. Cf. our comments on chapter 10. 5 above. St. Paul used the comparison of a potter in Romans 9. 20-25 to teach that God gives or

omits to give full membership in the People of God as He wills, independently of human merit. Cf. comments on those verses in Wm. Most, <The Thought of St. Paul>.

Isaiah continues pleading: Your sacred cities have become a desert, our glorious temple has been burned. O Lord will you hold back? Will you punish us beyond measure?

Contrast of the Obstinate and the Lord's Servants. Chapter 65. Summary and Comments

God says: "I revealed myself to those who did not call on me. I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on me, I said: Here I am."

St. Paul in Romans 10. 20 uses this verse to mean God has called the gentiles. And as Ephesians 3. 6 tells us, God did call the gentiles to be part of His people. Paul adds in 10. 21: "to Israel He says: All day I stretched out my hands to a people that did not believe, but contradicted." Yes. Jesus did stretch out His hands to Israel all day, but on the whole, they contradicted, rejected, and nailed those hands to the cross.

In Romans 3. 29 St. Paul asks: "Is He the God of the Jews only? No, He is also God of the gentiles." He means that if God had made eternal salvation depend on keeping the Mosaic law, He would act as if He did not care for any people but the Jews. Then He would not be the God of the others. But God has actually made provision for the others, by means of justification by faith. Faith in St. Paul's sense includes: 1) believe what God says; 2) Have confidence; 3) obey: cf. Romans 1:5, "the obedience of faith", i. e, the obedience that faith is.

So Paul in Romans 4 explains that Abraham was justified, not by the law, but by faith. This is evident. 1) Abraham believed God; 2) Had confidence in His word; 3) he obeyed, so as to believe in the coming birth of Isaac, and to be willing to sacrifice Isaac.

We can see how the gentiles, as Isaiah predicts here, could be justified by faith.

St. Justin Martyr, c. 145 A. D. in <Apology> 1. 46, said that in the past some who were thought to be atheists, such as Socrates and Heraclitus, were really Christians, for they followed the Divine Logos, the Divine Word. Thus Socrates 1) believed what the Spirit of Christ wrote on his heart (Rom 2:15 citing Jer 31. 33); 2) He had confidence in it; 3) He obeyed what the Spirit of Christ wrote on his heart. Hence Socrates fulfilled the Pauline