

## Isaiah 63:1-6 The Striking Pictures of Christ as God's Anointed Conqueror

As we've worked our way almost to the end of Isaiah, we've seen clearly the person and work of God's Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Starting in cp. 42 and ending in 53, Isaiah describes the Messiah as the suffering servant, the One who will come and serve the purpose of God to save his people through suffering (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). As we look back, we see this is clearly the life and death of Christ. Mark 10:45 says, "**For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.**" Now, beginning in cp. 59 through 63, we see the Messiah again. However, he is seen, not as the One who suffers, but as the One who conquers, the One who brings ultimate fulfillment to the Day of the Lord's vengeance (59:21; 61:1-3; 61:10-62:7; 63:1-6). Verse 1 begins with the question: "Who is He . . ." Today, this text will answer this question from a perspective of truth that we often neglect or forget. But, Oh, how we need these truths . . . that we might see Christ as more beautiful! I have 4 truths with some applications to follow.

1. He is a man of war. In v. 1 He is dressed as a warrior. He is "*splendid in his apparel.*" In v. 3, his clothes a "*spattered*" with blood from those who are slain. Now, in Isaiah's context, God Himself is the Great Warrior. I am sure Isaiah's readers would have remembered the 185,000 Assyrians who were mounting an attack on Jerusalem and suddenly killed by God's angel (Is. 37). Throughout the book, God is the God of War, mighty in battle, always victorious! Examples abound! I think of Moses, the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh's armies. In Exod. 15 Moses sings: "**I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea . . . The Lord is a man of war; The Lord is his name**" (vv. 1-3).

I think of the conquest of Joshua and Israel over the Promised Land. City after city and people after people fall as God leads his people into battle. In 1 Sam. 17:45 David says to the Philistine, "**You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.**" Psalm 24:7-10 says: "**Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!**"

In today's culture, we hear VERY OFTEN, "*God is love.*" And such is true! There are NONE who are able to love as HE does because LOVE is WHO HE IS. It is not added to Him at some point in his existence. It has always been! Faith and hope will pass away. But love remains. However, we must also know that God is holy. In fact, his love is holy. But, out of his holiness, also flows wrath upon ALL sin. Even as Christians, we tend to pass over such truths. Even our passage today is striking with pictures. Verse 3: "**I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.**" And v. 6: "**I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.**"

It is interesting that God is called a “man” of war, EVEN in the OT. I ask, “*How can this be?*” For, He is not a man. “**God is Spirit**” (John 4:24). And God will not give his glory to another. (Is. 42:8; 48:11). We know the answer! It is the Lord Jesus. And those who read the OT SHOULD know the answer. Why? Often, there is a man who comes as the Angel of the Lord. And He is no ordinary man. In fact, when He appears, He is worshipped. I’ll give one example. Before the greatest time of conquest in Israel’s history, this figure appears before Joshua. And HE is called, “The Commander of the Lord’s Army.” Let me read from Josh 5:13-15: “**When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, ‘Are you for us, or for our adversaries?’ And he said, ‘No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, ‘What does my lord say to his servant?’ And the commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, ‘Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.’ And Joshua did so.**” Keep your finger on this passage for later. But our truth for now is this: The Lord Jesus, who is God in the flesh, is a man of war.

2. The focus of his wrath are the enemies of God. Look at v. 1. He comes from “*Edom*” and “*Bozrah*.” This is very important. Isaiah’s hearers would have immediately understood the meaning. And so should we. Throughout the history of Israel, “Edom” has been Israel’s greatest enemy. The word means “red.” And we see it first with Esau, Jacob’s older brother. When Isaac’s wife, Rebecca, was pregnant with twins, they fought within her womb. And God said to her, “**Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger**” (Gen. 25:23). And this conflict continued throughout their life, though they made amends and parted ways when they were older. And as God said, the offspring of these two men became two nations, two peoples.

Do you remember when Moses led the people out of Egypt and in their travels, He asked the king of Edom if they could pass through their land. He said, “**No, lest I come out with the sword against you**” (Num. 20:18). And in fact, this is what he did (20:20). And Israel never forgot. Later, King Saul and King David would defeat Edom, making them servants. And throughout their history, Edom always revolts. Later, they join the Babylonians to overthrow Judah. Ninety times we see the word “Edom,” and in almost every case, God’s anger and wrath is about to fall on them as the arch enemy of God. In Is. 34:5 we read: “**For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.**” In Mal. 1:4 God says concerning Edom: “**They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.’**” This context helps us understand the verse in Rom. 9:13 where Paul says, “**Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.**” From the perspective, there is no love for the enemies of God.

Now, it is interesting that our current text speaks of an Anointed Conqueror as the One who will make war on Edom. And we know this to be the Lord Jesus. The OT is clear with prophecies that the Lord Jesus would conquer Edom. After Israel left Egypt and became more and more numerous in the land, Balak, the King of Moab decided to hire a famous religious man (false prophet) named Balaam. And apparently Balaam wanted to take the money and say some words

against Israel. But God Himself spoke to Balaam and 3 times, instead of cursing Israel, he blessed them. Let me read from his 3<sup>rd</sup> oracle. It is very interesting. Num. 24:17: **"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed."** Let me ask, *"Who is he speaking about?"* Is it God? Or, is it One who will come out of Israel? Turn with me to Gen. 49:10-11: Jacob gives a prophesy about his sons. And listen to what he says about One from the tribe of Judah. **"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes."** This sounds just like our passage in Isaiah. Look at v. 2: **"Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress."**

So how do we make sense of this? For when Jesus lived, as far as we know Edom had already been conquered and ceased to exist as a nation (They were conquered by the Nabataens and the few who remained were called Idumaens. Herod the Great's father was Idumaen. See Eerdmans.) And now, Jesus lived, died, rose again. And He Himself never conquered the nation of Edom. I think the explanation is easy. You see, for Isaiah (and the other prophets), Edom becomes a picture of ALL those who oppose God. In the same way, Isaiah pictures Babylon, not merely as an ungodly nation, but as a picture of the entire world. Therefore, Edom is a picture of ALL those who oppose God. Look at v. 6. It is no longer simply Edom, but the nations. **"I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."**

3. The basis of his wrath is righteousness. Look at the end of v. 1. When asked, *"Who is this man of war splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength,* He says, **"It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."** In the Book of Isaiah we see the word "righteousness" used 48 times. We see "righteous" used 11 times. "Justice" is used 28 times. In cp. 6 Isaiah saw the Lord of Righteousness. The Seraphim cry out to one another: **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"** And he sees himself as a sinner. And he sees ALL the people as sinners, as those who are "NOT full of his glory!" And so this anointed conqueror comes as One who IS righteous. He is not merely one who does righteousness. As the Jehovah's Witnesses believe, he is not merely a creature who has not sinned. NO! He is as righteous as God is righteous. Otherwise, He could not dare proclaim to pour out the wrath of God upon sinners. This would be blasphemy! (This is why He is also "mighty to save.")

This is why Peter, in his very first sermon says, **"The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses"** (Acts 3:13-15). Brothers and sisters, if he were not the Righteous One of whom Isaiah prophesied, we would have no gospel. As the Son of God and the Son of Man, Jesus lived his whole life as the Righteous One, who knew no sin, fulfilling all the requirements of God's law,

in both deed and motive. This is why NOW, **“the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law . . . “whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness”** (Rom. 3:21-26). Let me end this truth by reading a statement from our confession.

**Of the World to Come We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.**

4. He alone wages war. This truth is abundantly clear in this passage . . . AND in the Book of Isaiah, and in the entire Bible. This man stands out! He alone is worthy! He alone is able to carry out the Day of God’s Vengeance! There are NONE who are his equal! Why? No one is righteous. No one can march in such strength! No one can wear such apparel! We are not filled with wrath as He is. HE is a one-man army. Look at v. 3: **“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me.”** And He continues, **“I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.”** This is not the anger or wrath of a creature like us. And “HIS” garments ALONE are stained. In v. 4 we read: **“For the day of vengeance was in my heart.”** Look at v. 5: **“I looked, but there was no one to help . . .”** These are not the words of a mere man. For the armies of man have lots of help. And He doesn’t simply look around the room. He looks throughout the earth and He finds NO ONE! And we continue: **“I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.”**

Probably the best OT illustration of this principle is found in our verses above with Joshua. Let me read a couple again. When Joshua asks the Angel of the Lord, “Are you for us or against us?” He puts HIMSELF in a place where ONLY He can be. He answers: **“No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.”** And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, **“What does my lord say to his servant?”** Today, the Lord Jesus carries out the will of God. And in this way, He does what He desires, when He wants to do it, and in what manner He wants to carry it out.

Though these verses find their fulfillment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of the Son, there is a clear view of the cross. It is interesting that this anointed conqueror is also seen as one who **“treads in the winepress”** (vv. 2-3). Here we see something that a conquering Lord does not take part in. These are the words of humility, the description of a servant. And coupled with these words of “servanthood” we see the words “redemption” and “salvation” (vv. 1, 4, 5). Let me end with some applications.

Application: He is the victor of this great war. His weapons are not of this world. They flow from God Himself. They are holy and righteous. They are not spears or swords or guns. He needs no shield for defense. For his war is only offensive. For no weapon formed against him can prevail! We do not and CAN NOT engage in battle in the ways he does. This means He is our captain. And He has provided EVERYTHING we need to wage war (Eph. 6:10-20).

Application: All judgment passes through the robe of God's righteousness. No matter who you are, your blood will fall upon the robe of righteousness. Your sins will be dealt with; either in judgment or in salvation. Think about it. God's wrath will judge your sins! This will be fulfilled when Christ comes back a 2<sup>nd</sup> time. Or, in the mercy of God, your sins will be judged on the cross of Christ. Either way, blood flows through the righteous robe of Christ. And either way, the robe of Christ is covered with the blood of all! He either treads the winepress of God's wrath upon sinners. Or, He treads the winepress of God's wrath in the place of sinners. Christ ALONE carries out God's wrath. And . . . Christ ALONE bears God's wrath.

Application: All praise and honor and worship must be given to God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All the cases of judgment and wrath in the Bible are a prelude to God's final day of vengeance when Jesus ALONE will judge. It is interesting that throughout Isaiah and the Bible, God's normal means for waging war against the nations are other nations. But, on the last day, it will be the Lord Jesus who leads the armies of God. And there will be no other generals, no other officers, no who can equal him. For He is the Lord of Lord and King of Kings! Therefore, worship Him today!

Application: The focus of God's wrath are ALL his enemies, ALL those who sin and fall short of the glory of God. This means the wrath of God remains and will be poured out in the ways the Bible says on the last day. And the Son of God is his agent. Today is the day of salvation. His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming will be the day of God's vengeance. And this day is fixed!

Application: He will wipe away every tear! No more unrighteousness!

I would like to finish with a commentary from Rev. 19:11-16. And as I read, notice our truths from today: 1) He is a man of war; 2) The Focus of his wrath are the enemies of God; 3) The basis of his wrath is righteousness; and 4) He alone wages war. **"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."**