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Isaiah - Warfare and Judgment



Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg offers a unique perspective on the Book of Isaiah, exploring its themes of warfare and judgment through a spiritual lens. He discusses the role of national entities and personification in Isaiah, emphasizing the importance of understanding the nation that God establishes through the Messiah and the church. Gregg also unpacks the significance of the arm of the Lord, which is seen as a manifestation of salvation and judgment in the Messianic age. Ultimately, Gregg presents Isaiah's message as one of spiritual warfare, reminding listeners of the power of God's arm to bring salvation and establish justice on earth.

Transcript

We're treating the Book of Isaiah at this point in a way that I've never actually encountered anybody else who treats the Book of Isaiah in this topical fashion. I felt some years ago that this was a very good way to study the Book of Isaiah. After having taught it through verse by verse a number of times in different years, I hit on the idea that if I would take some of the topics of Isaiah and trace them through the book, then people can become familiar with the things that are strange to us in the way that Isaiah communicates.

And then when we do go through the book, we hit these things and they're not strange to us, and they don't need to be explained every time we hit them. And so I arranged many years ago, probably it's been at least 15 years ago, if not more, probably 20 years ago, I arranged a topical study of Isaiah, which was very rewarding for me to do. And I have been reworking some of that just in preparation of this school.

And we're going to go verse by verse or at least chapter by chapter through Isaiah before we're done. But I'm taking this opportunity at the beginning of our study to go through some of these motifs, some of these archetypes that Isaiah uses that are repeatedly brought up. There's certain imagery that you might misunderstand if you don't give it some special consideration.

And so we're now looking at our second page of notes on Isaiah's motifs. We were talking

yesterday about the various imagery used in Isaiah to depict national entities, sometimes personifying them or anthropomorphic imagery where they're like humans, like a nation is described as an individual or even as an animal. And by the way, we didn't see so much in Isaiah of this depiction of nations as animals.

We did find some places where there's reference to God cutting off the head and the tail, or something like that, which of course suggests an animal image. But in other books, for example, Jeremiah, Babylon is likened to a lion. In Daniel chapter 7, Babylon is likened to a lion and Mediapersia to a bear and Alexander the Great's empire to a leopard and so forth.

So there are times when we find nations depicted as animals. That's just one of the ways that the symbolism of the prophets is found to be operating. And also we found that sometimes a nation, usually a nation contemporary with Isaiah, which may not even exist anymore, some ancient nation that has been gone for thousands of years, may be mentioned as having some kind of a role in God's ultimate purposes, when in fact God's ultimate purposes, which came to pass in Christ, came at a time after the very nations named had ceased to exist.

And we find that what Isaiah is doing at times is using just an individual nation to represent the nations as a whole, the Gentile world as a whole. Edom or the Philistines or Elam or Assyria or Egypt even sometimes are used to represent simply the idea of the Gentiles without really being a reference to that particular nation name. And when we were last together, we were looking at the fact that the nation most important, mentioned Isaiah, is that nation which God would establish through the Messiah, which is us, the church.

The church, as Peter tells us in 1 Peter chapter 2, is a holy nation. We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, 1 Peter 2.9 tells us. We don't think of ourselves as a nation.

We usually think of Christianity as a religion, not a nation. However, in the Bible, that is in the New Testament, the Christian movement is not viewed as a religion, although there is worship of God as a central feature, but it is the worship of God who is our king, and therefore it's more of a political kind of a thing. It's more that it's a society governed by a ruler.

It is a nation. The church is a holy nation under Christ, who is our king, and therefore it really changes things when you stop thinking of Christianity as a religion that you subscribe to and realize it is a nation that you have become a citizen of and you have a king. And that is, of course, the ultimate purpose of God was to establish a kingdom under his son, the Messiah.

Isaiah talks about that, but he uses imagery in speaking about the church of Israel and

Judah and Jerusalem and Zion and things that had to do with really the Jewish nation in the Old Testament times. The church, in a sense, is a continuation of that because God took the remnant of the Jewish nation and incorporated them into the new society, the very first Christians for many years were Jewish people. On the day of Pentecost, the church had its first 3,000 members.

They were all Jewish, and for some time after, all the members of the church were Jewish. Eventually, Gentiles were able to be grafted into this olive tree and became part of it as well, but the original church was a continuation of what God had established in the Old Testament, the Jewish nation, but it was only the remnant of Israel that came into the new nation of the church. And now we, most of us are not Jewish.

I don't know if any of us in this room are Jewish by birth, but we are Gentiles who have become part of that which was originally the new Israel, made up of the remnant of Israel in the first century, and that is the Messianic age, the Messianic nation, and it is, I said that in Isaiah, you'll sometimes find Jerusalem or Zion or Israel as a reference to the Old Testament Israel, and that is because Isaiah sometimes talks about Israel in his own day, but when he's talking about the Messianic age and he speaks of Zion or Jerusalem or Israel, he's then speaking about that Israel which is established through the coming of the Messiah, which, of course, happened when Jesus was here and he established the new Israel, what Paul refers to in Galatians 6.16 as the Israel of God, the church he refers to as the Israel of God, and Peter refers to us as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people in 1 Peter 2.9, which are all terms used for national Israel in the Old Testament but are now applicable in the New Testament to the church. So that nation, the church, was the nation that we were considering last in Isaiah and the imagery used to suggest the church, which we could miss because the language of Judah, Zion, Jerusalem, Israel, if we aren't aware of how Isaiah is using it at times, we will think that these are predictions that must have a fulfillment somehow in the Middle East with the ethnic Jews, and the way we saw that this is not the case in these Messianic passages is that the New Testament writers quote them and apply them to the church rather than to ethnic Israel, and we are moving through this study with the assumption that the apostles knew best, that Jesus opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures according to Luke 24.45, and therefore if Jesus opened their understanding so that they could understand the scriptures, then they did understand the scriptures. They understood them better than the rabbis.

They understood them better than we would without the guidance of the apostolic witness, but we do have the apostolic witness in the New Testament, and therefore we have the code breaker. We have the key to understanding what was symbolic and which, as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 3, was veiled. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3 that the Old Testament was veiled, that the Jew, he says, to this day when he reads the Old Testament, there's a veil over his heart and he doesn't understand it.

He said that veil is taken away in Christ, so that when one becomes a Christian and begins to be instructed in the ways of Christ, suddenly the veil is removed and the Old Testament is intelligible in a different way though than it was before. Certainly the rabbis were not unable to make sense of the Old Testament. They made sense of it.

They just made the wrong sense of it, and that is why although they were very familiar with the predictions about the Messiah, when he actually showed up, they missed it because their understanding of the Old Testament was not God's understanding of it. They expected the Messiah to be of a certain sort. He came and he wasn't of that sort because they had misunderstood the prophecies, and yet he, the Messiah, gave his disciples the ability to properly understand the prophecies, and therefore through their writings we have the ability to do so and to not make the same mistake.

Sadly, there are many Christians of a certain theological orientation that are still stuck with the rabbinic ideas of these prophecies. There are Christians who still look at these passages and say, well, this is talking about national Israel. This is talking about the last days in the Middle East and so forth, which is, of course, what the rabbis thought.

I mean, these Christians are actually following the assumptions of the rabbis. In fact, they say we should. They say we can't really understand these differently than the Jews did because if the Jews weren't right, then God deceived them, but of course God didn't tell them that their view of it was right, so he didn't deceive them.

He said the things he wanted to say and the way he wanted to say them, they reached their conclusions about what he meant mistakenly. Then he sent Jesus and Jesus corrected it, and therefore Christians have no excuse for being ignorant and for following the old rabbinic ways of looking at things when we have the apostolic witness telling us what they mean. That's what we're counting on in these lectures all the way through the prophets in this school.

I'm going to be assuming that where the New Testament writers have quoted and applied a certain prophetic scripture, they are applying it in the correct way. We will find that to be very helpful because sometimes the way they have applied it is different than we would have intuitively thought without their guidance. Now, I want to talk in this lecture about Isaiah's symbolic imagery of warfare, judgment, and redemption.

There's a lot of war. In Isaiah's day, there was actual war between, on the one hand, Judah and Assyria. There was also a threatened war between Judah and a coalition made up of Israel and Syria.

And then there was, of course, the results of war with Babylon that forms some of the milieu of some of the chapters later in Isaiah. Warfare was a common experience for people in the Middle East. Israel lay in a very strategic plot of land between Egypt and powers to the north.

Those powers to the north included Syria. And sometimes the wars between Egypt and Syria were what gave Israel trouble because the armies would go through Israel to invade the other country. And they would not be nice to the Israelites as they went through.

And so in the time just before Christ, for example, there were wars between the Seleucid dynasty in Syria and the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. And these usually, although Israel was not the target of any of these wars, Israel just got trampled on because the armies had to march through there to invade the other country. Earlier in Isaiah's time, it was Assyria and Babylon that came down from the north.

And Isaiah lived at a time of Assyrian expansion, where Assyria was actually annexing and conquering nations all around the region. And, of course, eventually did so with Israel, the northern kingdom, and attempted to do so with Judah. And would have succeeded, certainly, if not for God's intervention.

Judah actually was spared from that annexation, but Israel was not. And so this is the milieu of Isaiah's writing. He's writing at a time actually before and after the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria.

And during the time when his own country, Judah, was invaded. And most of the villages of Judah were ruined and wiped out and burned down by Assyria. Isaiah himself lived in Jerusalem, the one city in Judah that didn't fall.

And so he did not succumb to the worst effects of the invasion, but he lived at a time where his was being invaded and destroyed. So this is a warfare season in history. Of course, there's hardly ever been a season in history that didn't have warfare somewhere or another.

But the ideas of war are used in Isaiah, sometimes referring to the wars that are going on in his time, sometimes actually more in a spiritual sense, I think, conveying the idea of a spiritual warfare, especially in the messianic age. Warfare in Isaiah is usually cast as judgment from the Lord. Secular people today and probably throughout history may not have thought that way, although until recent times there weren't many secular people.

Secular, which means having no connection with religion, is a relatively new phenomenon in history, probably since the Enlightenment. Before that, almost all nations were religious. They weren't always Christian, but they were religious.

In Isaiah's time, all the nations had their national gods and national priesthods and national religions. There just wasn't such a thing as secular. If you were in Israel, everything was related to Yahweh.

If you were in Moab, everything was related to Shemash, the god of the Moabites, and so forth. No matter what nation you were in, it was a religious nation. And therefore, in

ancient times, warfare, which was, of course, international conflict, was usually viewed as the conflict between the gods of different nations, because each nation had its patron god.

And a nation that would lose in war was assumed to have had a weaker god, who could not defend it against the nation and the gods of an invader. And so Israel, too, sees it this way, and rightly so, because, of course, although the gods of the heathen are not gods at all, they're just stone and wood, and Isaiah points that out a number of times, yet the god of Israel is a real god. He's Yahweh, and what he does through warfare is his intended judgment on nations.

So Israel to the north fell in Isaiah's day. That was God's judgment on them, as many prophets like Hosea had warned them about. What happened to Judah was a judgment on Judah, too, but the deliverance of Jerusalem was also God's intervention to spare them from ultimate judgment.

When Syria fell to Assyria, that was God's judgment on Syria. When Assyria itself later fell to Babylon, that was God's judgment on Assyria, and Isaiah speaks about that in Isaiah chapter 10, a whole chapter about how God will judge Assyria. That was, of course, through the Babylonians conquering the Assyrians.

Later, in Isaiah, in the last 27 chapters, the scene is of Babylon itself coming under God's judgment through the agency of the Assyrians under Cyrus. So warfare in Isaiah is not just political, it's religious. Warfare actually is the tool that God uses to judge nations, and so we're going to find this assumption and this declaration throughout the book of Isaiah in many different settings, talking about different wars, and I believe there are passages where wars are spoken of in the Messianic era, which are to be understood spiritually, and God uses the church through spiritual warfare, which is primarily made up of the preaching of the gospel, to judge the demons, the false gods, the devil, and to capture his people, and so there's always a spiritual meaning behind warfare.

We, in secular times like ours, it may be assumed that this is not the case, that wars just happen because of national ambition or hostility, and that, you know, it's just these wars are decided upon and conducted and settled by human agency alone, but I suppose that Isaiah's mindset was true not only of his own time but of all times. I think that the Bible would inform us that where there is warfare, there is judgment taking place, and it would not be hard for most of us to believe that World War II and our participation in it served as a judgment on Adolf Hitler and his wicked regime. There's very few of us that would doubt that Mr. Hitler deserved God's judgment, and that God used the allied forces to bring about that judgment.

In other words, some Christians would have no difficulty seeing some of our wars as the judgment of God. Now, on the other hand, if some nation would attack us, if North Korea would send missiles over here and blow up our cities, or if some other nation, some

Muslim nation, would overrun us, or China or some other nation would conquer us, we might have a harder time immediately recognizing that as God's judgment against America. It's much easier to recognize God's judgment against your enemies when they succumb in war than to recognize that when you succumb in war, that's God's judgment on your nation, but that's the position that Isaiah was in.

It's easy to see God judging Assyria and Syria and Babylon through war, but when your own country succumbs to the Assyrians, when your own country is wiped out, say, that's God's judgment on us, is the way Isaiah interpreted things correctly, and perhaps would be the way that we should, under the inspiration of the prophets, we should recognize that if something like that should happen to us. Many people, many Christians thought that 9-11 was sort of God firing a warning shot over the bow of America to say, you know, you are near to experiencing judgment for your wickedness, and I don't say that that is so or is not so, but from the mindset that the prophets had, I would think that would not be a, I don't think that'd be an unreasonable conclusion. I'm not a prophet, so I can't say that that is the correct interpretation of that event.

It would take a prophet to tell us, but it may well be that we would give that thought some consideration. Now, one of the phenomena or features of Isaiah that comes up in many passages is the reference to the arm of the Lord. Nine times in Isaiah, you read about the arm of the Lord.

Now, the arm of the Lord or the hand of the Lord stretched out is always a reference to judgment. It's usually in the context of a war, and a nation that is suffering the ravages of war and defeat is a nation that God has stretched out his arm against, which of course his arm, his strength, the Bible speaks about him bearing his arm like we talk about someone rolling up their sleeves, you know, to maybe expose their muscles and get ready to use them. And so the destruction that comes on nations through war is sometimes mentioned in the figure of the arm of the Lord.

But what's interesting about the arm of the Lord as you look at the various passages is that the arm of the Lord is also bringing salvation. Of course, many times the salvation is in the form of God saving Judah or maybe Jerusalem from the siege of the Assyrians or saving Judah from the conspiracy of Syria and Ephraim that were coming against him or saving Judah from captivity in Babylon, all of which deliverances involve war. That is, God's judgment on Babylon was Israel's deliverance.

God's judgment on Assyria at the gates of Jerusalem, at the walls of Jerusalem, was Judah's deliverance. So that the arm of the Lord is seen as the judgment of God in one sense, but on the other side he's bringing salvation by his mighty arm. And then there are some passages where the arm of the Lord is almost personified.

And one is tempted to think perhaps he's thinking maybe he's using the term the arm of the Lord in some of these cases to refer to Jesus himself. He refers to his right arm. And

especially in Isaiah 53.1, for example, to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up among us as a tender plant.

Who's he? The arm of the Lord who is revealed? Now of course it does not necessarily mean that Jesus is the arm of the Lord in the literal sense that the arm is another name for the Messiah. It could be in some passages. Although it would suggest that if that's not a direct one-to-one correspondence, nonetheless the manifestation of the Messiah was yet another manifestation of the salvation that the arm of the Lord brings.

The arm of the Lord would speak of his strength in particular and it is seen functioning in judgment upon the wicked. And usually the judgment of the wicked is in order to bring salvation to his people. And sometimes it is Christ himself who is in view.

In judgment, in the book of Isaiah, in chapter 30 and verse 30, we read, the Lord will cause his glorious voice to be heard and show the descent of his arm. He's lowering his arm like lowering the boom with anger. And it says, with indignation and, excuse me, with the indignation of his anger and the flame of a devouring fire with scattering tempest and hail stones.

Now this is describing the judgment that's coming on Assyria in this particular case, but the language is the descent of God's arm will be with indignation and anger and judgment and destruction. So the arm of the Lord here is coming down like lowering of the boom on Assyria in judgment. And we have this similar language where instead of the word arm, we have hand used in Isaiah in a number of places in the early chapters.

Like in chapter 525, it says, therefore, the anger of the Lord is aroused against his people. He has stretched out his hand against them and stricken them. And the hills trembled and their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets.

God has stretched out his hand against them, meaning, of course, he's he's striking them. He is judging them. And this is, of course, fulfilled in the form of warfare that these people were involved in at the time.

In chapter nine, there is a prophecy in several stanzas. There are four stanzas. It's a prophecy of judgment begins in chapter nine, verse eight, and goes through chapter 10, verse four.

And each of these stanzas closes with the same refrain. And the refrain is this, you find it, first of all, in the second half of verse 12, chapter nine, verse 12. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

In other words, all the devastation mentioned prior to that verse is really just the beginning. They've suffered this much, but it's not over. You ain't seen nothing yet.

His hand is still stretched out after all of this. He's continuing to judge. The next stanza

ends in verse 17.

At the end of verse 17, for all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. The same refrain is at the end of the chapter, which would be at the end of the third stanza of this song. In verse 21, for all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Each stanza gives, it sort of catalogs disasters that have come upon those that God is judging. And at the end of it, for all that, it's not over. There's more coming yet.

And the last stanza of this particular song is chapter 10, verses one through four, which ends with, of course, the exact same words, the same refrain. In chapter 14, verse 26 and 27, it says, this is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth. And by the way, as we find the word earth in the Bible, it can always be translated land.

It may be needn't always be translated land. It's simply that the word Eretz in the Hebrew is the same word for land or earth. There's no way to differentiate between those two English ideas.

There's only one Hebrew word. So earth could always be translated land. If the context would justify it and land could always be translated earth.

If the context would justify it, it's really a translator's judgment call. And so it could be, this is the purpose, his purpose against the whole land. In this case, it's the land of Assyria that he's talking about from verse 24 on, but it says in verse 26, and his, this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations, being God's hand is stretched out over the nations that are affiliated with Assyria probably for the Lord of hosts has purposed.

And who will annul it? His hand is stretched out and who will turn it back? If God decides to judge a nation and stretches out his hands to get it, who can turn God's hand back? You know, no matter how many nuclear missiles you have in your arsenal, if God wants to judge you, you can't stop it. Every one of those could malfunction when the red button is pushed, you know, God can judge a nation, no matter what, how strong it's military. In the days of Gideon, Israel had 300, an army of 300 against an invasion force of 30,000 or more, actually 30,000 Midianites were killed in that battle by the 300.

But here we have a force that's clearly superior, but God wants to judge them, the Midianites. And with 300 men, Gideon manages, well, not Gideon, but God manages to rout the Midianites who have 30,000. Likewise, when God wanted to judge Israel because of Achan's sin, when Israel went against Ai, a very small country, Israel definitely had the greater military force, but they were routed by the small town of Ai because God said there's sin in the camp.

You see, it says in Psalm, a horse is a vain thing for battle, neither is any king saved by

the multitude of his horses. David said, some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God. Horses and chariots, these are the images of warfare.

And yet, the Bible makes it very clear, you can build up as much military might as you wish, it's not going to guarantee any security for you if God is against you. If God's hand is stretched out, who will turn it back? No amount of military might can turn back the judgment of God if that's what he's interested in doing, namely judging you. There are numerous places in the Old Testament that tell us that if a person or a nation is under God's judgment, there's nothing going to save them.

And that is why the early Christians in the first three centuries, when they refused to fight in Rome's wars and were accused by their countrymen of enjoying the benefits that were won through war, but not willing to pay the price of going out and fighting the wars themselves. And basically, people like Mennonites and Quakers and so forth who don't fight in wars have received the same criticism in modern times. People say, well, you're living in a free country, our freedoms were won through war, and you won't go out and fight, you'll enjoy the benefits, you'll enjoy the fruits of war, but you won't pay the price of going out and fighting.

The early Christians were criticized on the exact same basis with the same criticism. But they said, and I think it was Tertullian who said, although it could have been Justin Marder, they said the Christians are the ones who do the most for the security of the nation. Because a nation will rise or fall not because of the strength of its military, but because God chooses either to judge it or not.

If a nation is very wicked, God will judge it, and no amount of armies can stop it. If the nation is righteous, God will bless it, and no amount of armies can overthrow it. And it is the church alone that is able to affect the righteousness of the nation.

The influence of the church spreading the leaven of the kingdom of God and bringing about a more just society and a less sinful society is doing for the nation the thing that will most preserve it, things that the armies themselves cannot do. Because if God wishes to judge a nation, no number of armies can save it. If God does not wish to judge it and he wants to bless it, no invading force can succeed against it.

The Old Testament shows that is true, and it is declared to be true in Scripture. Certainly, even if we do not take as hard a line as the early Christians did against Christians fighting in wars, we would have to admit that even if Christians do fight in wars, it is not that that will save the nation. It is the church preaching the gospel, living consistently in such a way that their lives influence the nation for righteousness.

If we succeed in that spiritual battle, then other battles may be rendered superfluous for the security of the nation. Now, in chapter 52, the arm of the Lord is seen bringing

salvation. Now, we can see the hand and arm of the Lord is, first of all, an image of God's judgment, but it is judgment on the wicked.

There is always another group, the ones who are suffering at the hands of the wicked. And for that group, the judgment of the wicked becomes deliverance or vindication from God. And so in chapter 52, in verse 10, we read, The Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.

God bears his arm to bring salvation. And of course, it goes on from there to talk about Christ. And in Isaiah 53 verses 1 and 2, we see it is personified in Christ, but we'll get there eventually.

In chapter 59, verses 15 through 17, it says, So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. That is, the person who doesn't walk with the wicked in the wicked ways, they end up being victimized, they're persecuted, and they make themselves a prey to those who are wicked. You have to run with the wicked in their wicked ways if you want to keep them from hating you and persecuting you.

But it says, Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore, his own arm brought salvation for him, and his own righteousness, it sustained him.

Notice God's arm brings salvation. Now, this is where we begin to wonder, is the arm of the Lord beginning to merge into the concept of Jesus himself, who is the one who brings salvation when no one else can? Because no one else can save, no one else can intercede. God does it himself through the agency of his own arm, which of course, if we would take that with the most literal correspondence to reality, we'd have to say that arm would represent Jesus, whether it's intended to mean Jesus or simply meant to mean God's strength.

God, by his own strength, intercedes to save. But of course, even so, if that's what it does mean, it's still talking about him sending Jesus. Jesus is the power of God sent to save.

In Isaiah chapter 63 and verse 5, it says, I looked, but there was no one to help. And I wondered, and there was no one to uphold. Therefore, my own arm brought salvation for me, and my own fury, it sustained me.

So again, the arm of the Lord is that which brings salvation. In Isaiah 51, this is where I begin to suspect that we're looking at Jesus as the arm of the Lord. In Isaiah 51.5 it says, my righteousness is near, my salvation has gone forth, and my arms will judge the peoples.

The coastlands will wait upon me, and on my arm they will trust. Now we could remember the song leaning on the everlasting arm, no doubt comes from verses like this

that talk about trusting in the arm or the strength of the Lord. But the reference to my arms will judge the peoples and the coastlands will wait upon me, that line is familiar from an earlier statement in Isaiah chapter 42, which is quoted in the New Testament as being about Jesus.

In Isaiah 42, verses 1 through 4, it says, behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my elect one in whom my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise his voice, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

A bruised reed he will not break, a smoking flax he will not quench. He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands will wait for his law.

Now this servant that is here spoken of clearly is Jesus. This passage in its entirety is quoted in Matthew 12, and it is applied to Jesus. It is said that this is about Jesus.

So he is that servant, and it says of him, he's going to establish justice in the earth. He's not going to fail or be discouraged in that enterprise, and the islands or the coastlands will await his law. What we just saw in chapter 51, 5, the same thing.

The coastlands will wait upon him, and on my arm they will trust. It almost seems that the arm of the Lord in this verse functions like the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42, which is Jesus. So you begin to have some overlap, some, as I said, some merging of ideas here from God's generic strength in salvation and judgment to a specific manifestation of his arm in Christ, and that's what we find in Isaiah 53, verses 1 and 2, where it says, Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground.

He has no form or comeliness that when we see him, when we see him, there's no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected by men, and so forth, and the prophecy goes on to be very recognizable to a Christian as a reference to Jesus. And yet it is referred to as the arm of the Lord being revealed when Jesus grows up among us as a tender plant.

When Jesus comes to the earth, it is the manifestation of the arm of the Lord being revealed. And so it does appear that Jesus becomes the, well, the incarnation of God's arm, as it were. In chapter 40, which of course the New Testament quotes from chapter 40 a great deal and applies it especially to the time of John the Baptist and Jesus, but in Isaiah 40, verses 10 and 11, it says, Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him.

Certainly, Jesus is the one who's been given all authority in heaven and earth to rule. Behold, his reward is with him, and his work is before him. He will feed his flock like a

shepherd.

Certainly sounds like Jesus. He will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those who are with young. This is referring to his arm.

The arm of the Lord will rule for him. The arm of the Lord will lead his flock like a shepherd and so forth, and carry them in his arm. So I'm thinking that the the strength of God, poetically referred to as his arm, his bared arm, is seen initially in judgment upon the wicked, which results in the salvation of the righteous, which eventually is personified in the Messiah himself, judging the wicked, Satan.

Jesus said in John chapter 12, verse 31, he said, Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. Later on, in John 16, Jesus said, When the Holy Spirit comes, he will convince the world of sin and righteousness of judgment, of sin because they do not believe in me, of righteousness because I go unto my father and you see me no more, of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged.

He means Satan. Jesus makes reference to, at the cross, Satan being judged, and the judgment of our enemy is the salvation of our people, and thus, as in the Old Testament, God's arm is bringing about physical, political deliverances of his people by physical, political, militaristic judgments on the wicked. So there's this spiritual judgment of our spiritual enemy, and our spiritual salvation through the personification of the arm of the Lord in Christ.

In Isaiah 62 and verse 8, we read, The Lord has sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength. It's interesting because in Genesis, God speaks to Abraham and says, By myself I have sworn, and the writer of Hebrews in chapter 6 picks up on that and says, God, because he could swear by none greater than himself, swore by himself. In Hebrews 6, it says, For invariably, a man always swears by something greater than himself, but since there's nothing greater than God for him to swear by, he simply swore by himself.

But now we find God saying, I have sworn by my right hand. I've sworn by my right arm. If this arm is Jesus, then we'd have to assume that God is swearing by himself, and Jesus is himself.

Surely I will no longer give you grain, your grain, to be food for your enemies, and the sons of the foreigners shall not drink your new wine, for which you have labored. So basically, God swears by his own arm, which in any case would be himself. My arm is part of myself.

But if the arm also has come to mean something more specific in the incarnation of God as a human being, then it would point to that incarnation as being God's own self. God is incarnate. He is, as Isaiah says in chapter 7 and verse 14, God with us, Emmanuel.

Now, there are passages in Isaiah where it seems to describe physical warfare, but where it may be intended to speak of spiritual victories, because the Messiah is in view in the passages. And of course, Jesus didn't come to fight physical wars. That's what disappointed his countrymen so much.

They hoped that the Messiah might, in fact, come and lead Israel in a victorious campaign against the Romans. That's what the Messiah was supposed to do, they thought. Why? Because there are passages like the following, which seem to describe messianic victories through war.

However, in the New Testament, we're told that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds and casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and bringing every thought into the captivity of obedience to Jesus Christ. That is the way Jesus conquers, is through not carnal weapons, but mighty weapons, which are, of course, spiritual. Paul says, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places.

Those statements that I've just referred to are in 2 Corinthians 10 verses 4 and 5, 2 Corinthians 10 verses 4 and 5, and Ephesians 6, beginning of verse 10, and following, so verse 17. Now, therefore, we find that in the New Testament, there is warfare affirmed, but it's not physical warfare. It is a spiritual warfare against spiritual enemies, fought with spiritual weapons.

Not so obvious when predicted in Isaiah. These are spiritual battles and spiritual victories, but they don't, they're not, they're really described in terms that you would think would describe physical. In chapter 27, which no doubt is a reference to the judgment upon Satan at the cross, it reads like this, in that day, verse 1, in that day, the Lord with his severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent.

Satan is probably Leviathan in this particular passage, since he is referred to as the fleeing serpent. Remember, the Bible says, resist the devil, and what will he do? He'll flee from you. Yet, though he flee, he cannot escape.

He will be punished, though he's a fleeing serpent. Leviathan, that twisted serpent, and he will slay the reptile that is in the sea. This imagery, no doubt, is speaking of the spiritual victory over Satan at the cross.

We have imagery like that in Revelation 12, verses 7 through 9, because there we see a war in heaven. It says, Michael and his angels make war against the dragon and his angels, and the dragon is there also referred to as that old serpent, in verse 9. So, this is the serpent being defeated in a spiritual conflict. It says, as you read that passage in Revelation 12, 7 through 9, that the dragon and his angels are defeated by Michael and

his angels, and they are cast out of heaven.

Thus, Jesus, in talking about the cross, says, now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out at the cross. Satan was defeated and cast out.

This is affirmed in many places in Scripture. It's affirmed in Colossians 1, 15, where Paul said, with reference to the cross, that Jesus disarmed principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross. In Hebrews 2, 14, the writer says that Christ, through death, destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil, Hebrews 2, 14.

So, you've got many affirmations that Satan was defeated at the cross through Christ's death, and this is depicted in Revelation 12 as a dragon serpent being thrown out of heaven because it loses the war that is fought there. Jesus' death was the victory that demoted Satan and threw him out of heaven. In Isaiah chapter 59, verses 16 through 19, Isaiah 59, 16, we actually read verse 16 earlier.

He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore, his own arm brought salvation for him and his own righteousness. It sustained him for he, that is God or Jesus or somebody, his arm put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head.

That should sound familiar because in Ephesians 6, where Paul enumerates the pieces of the Christian spiritual armor, he mentions a helmet of salvation and a breastplate of righteousness. Paul adds to that some other pieces, a belt of truth and shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace and the shield of faith, but he obviously didn't innovate these ideas of a helmet of salvation and a breastplate of righteousness. He got it directly from this passage.

And who's wearing the armor here? God himself. He couldn't find any man to do it, so his own arm put on this armor to fight the battles. Christ is the warrior.

When we put on the armor of God, we are simply putting on the Lord Jesus Christ because he's wearing the armor. That's how you put, you don't put on the armor of God by sitting at your bedside and mimicking the actions of putting a helmet on your head and saying, I am now putting on the helmet of salvation. This is what some people recommend, but it certainly isn't recommended in scripture.

But what is recommended in scripture, if you look at Romans chapter 13, Romans 13, 12, Paul says, the night is far spent. The day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light.

Well, how do we do that, Paul? Well, two verses later in verse 14, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. Putting on the armor of light is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. And in other words, he is armed.

He is, he's wearing the armor. You put the armor on by coming into him, by abiding in him, by living and walking in him, by letting him be your whole identity and your whole environment. And there's Christ becomes all to you.

A lot of people want to add Jesus to their life as sort of the, you know, one of the things on the list important to them, or maybe the top of the list, maybe the first thing, most important. Jesus is not the most important thing in your life. He is your life or he's nothing.

He cannot be the first of your list of priorities. He's got to be your only priority or he's not at all. He doesn't come on lesser terms.

He doesn't let us dictate the terms that will relate with him. He has already dictated that we take it or leave it. We come entirely to Christ.

He is not the first thing in our life. He is our life. Without him, we don't have a life to have first or second or third things in.

And therefore, he is everything. We come into him. We are absorbed into him.

Our whole environment, our whole world is him. And as we are in him, we have the armor on because he has the armor on. He's the one wearing the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation.

He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal as a cloak. Those are some things Paul didn't mention. Isaiah 59, 18, according to the deeds, their deeds, according will I repay fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies, the coastlands he will fully repay.

So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west and his glory from the rising of the sun, meaning the east. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. Anyone who's been evangelical or Pentecostal from childhood knows that line.

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against him. Very commonly quoted and applied to us. And in this case, rightly so.

Many times people quote verses like that that aren't really applicable to what they're using for. But in this case, this is quite correct. This is talking about spiritual victory, spiritual security in Christ.

He renders fury to his adversaries, not to the unbelievers, to the demons, to his real enemies. The unbelievers are not our enemies. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood.

They are not the enemy. They are the captives of the enemy. We're the Rambos sent in to get the prisoners of war out.

We're the ones who are sent in to rescue them. We sometimes treat the unbelievers like they're the enemy. We treat the Muslims like they're the enemy or the atheists like they're the enemy.

They're not the enemy. They don't have that much importance to be the enemy. The enemy is Satan.

The Muslims, the atheists, the non-believers, they're the victims. Like we used to be. We've been rescued.

Now we've been recruited to rescue the rest of them. And the enemies, the adversaries of God, are the demons and Satan. And he renders fury to them.

He puts on this armor. You can't defend yourself against physical enemies with this kind of armor. But in the warfare against spiritual enemies, righteousness and salvation and truth and faith are the true defense against their counterattacks.

But Christ's victory over his enemies, certainly spiritual enemies, is what is referred to in this place. In chapter 9, Isaiah chapter 9, verses 4 and 5, it says, For you have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle and the garments rolled in blood will be used for burning and fuel for fire.

Now this is language of military conquest. Defeated enemies, their corpses, their bloody garments being burned in a heap. This is a great deliverance that God brings about, like in the days of Midian.

What was the days of Midian? That was when Gideon with 300 men conquered and destroyed 30,000 Midianites in the book of Judges. He's saying this victory is as great as that victory and as unpredictable in natural terms. You would not have thought 300 men with Gideon would have defeated 30,000 of the enemy, but God defeated the enemy with an inferior human force that no flesh might boast and it would have to just glory in the Lord.

Now this is spiritual here. Why do I say that? Because it goes on to explain this victory, this divine victory over enemies is because, verse 6, because unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. The government will be upon his shoulder.

His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Because he has been born, this victory will be accomplished. It is a spiritual victory that comes through the birth of Jesus, not a physical victory, but the Jews didn't understand that.

It looked to them like it was going to be God routing the Romans like he routed the Midianites when the Messiah comes. Instead, God routed the devil and the demonic

forces, the principalities and powers, and the spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. That's what Jesus routed.

But clearly this passage is about Jesus and not only verse 6, but the earlier verses in chapter 9 are quoted in the fourth chapter of Matthew as being about Jesus' ministry. Those who sat in darkness have seen a great light. Matthew says that was fulfilled when Jesus began to minister in Galilee at the beginning of his ministry.

So this chapter 9, at least these first seven verses, clearly are associated with the first coming of Christ. His birth in verse 6, his Galilean ministry in the earlier verses, and those verses in between about the war and the bloodshed and the bloody garments and the conquest of the overwhelming enemy, that's all associated with the first coming of Jesus, not his second coming, and it is therefore spiritual. In chapter 63, and we're just about going to have to take our break, but let's look at chapter 63 verses 1 through 6. Who is this who comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? Bozrah is an Edomite capital.

This one who is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength. I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Why is your apparel red and your garments like one who treads the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone and from the peoples no one was with me.

For I've trodden them in my anger and trampled them in my fury. Their blood is sprinkled upon my garments and I've stained all my robes. For the day of vengeance is in my heart and the year of my redeemed has come.

I looked but there was no one to help. I wondered that there was no one to uphold. Therefore my own arm brought salvation for me and my own fury it sustained me.

I have trodden down the peoples in my anger, made them drink in my fury, and brought down their strength to the earth. Now this says that the person described, who is no doubt Jesus, or it is at least God, but probably it's Jesus, is coming out of Edom. Not sure exactly why coming out of Edom or coming out of Edom to where, but wherever he's coming to it is because it is the days of vengeance.

And he's treading his enemies under feet. This is Christ victorious over his enemies. Well the days of vengeance is a term that Jesus used in Luke 21.

And we're going to actually three times in the book of Isaiah, the day of vengeance is referred to. But Jesus in Luke 21, when he is describing the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, talking to his disciples in verse 20, he says, but when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains and let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in her in the country enter her.

For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Now this statement, all things that are written may be fulfilled, is applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The results of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies in the days of the apostles, when they would actually see it.

But interestingly it says, all things that are written, these are the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled. There's the day of vengeance is written three times in Isaiah, including the passage we just read. Is it AD 70 then? Perhaps.

If so, then the enemies he's trampling down are not merely the spiritual enemies, but also the nation of Israel, which has become his enemy. And he is now bringing judgment on the apostates who have killed his son. And we might say, but aren't they also victims of the enemy Satan? Yes, they were.

But he had delivered them. Jesus spoke of that generation in Matthew chapter 12 and said, when a demon goes out of a man, it travels through waterless places seeking rest and finding none. It returns to the house where it once lived and finds it swept and empty.

And he brings with him seven worse evil spirits, worse than himself, and enters that man. And the state of that man is worse at the end than in the first. And Jesus said, and thus shall it be with this wicked generation.

In other words, he's making an illustration. His nation Israel is like a man. The original condition was under the bondage of Satan, demon-possessed.

Jesus came and brought salvation. He'd cast out the demon, but they remained empty. They did not receive Christ.

And he said, what's going to happen to this nation, or what's going to happen to this generation, is like a man who's had a demon cast out, but they're going to come back in force. And indeed, the demonic bondage that the people came under at the end of Israel's history was immense. I won't go into the detail now, but one needs only to familiarize himself with the stories from Josephus about the Jewish war and the siege of Jerusalem and the behavior of the people.

You would need no further convincing that the whole nation had become demonized, totally blinded by demonic powers, but not as victims, but as a judgment from God upon them, because they had rejected the deliverance that he had sent them in their own, earlier in the same generation. They had been delivered, in a sense, by Christ. The light had come, but they chose the darkness.

And therefore, God sent them strong delusion that they might believe lie. These people were indeed victims, but they were guilty victims. There were victims who had been given a chance to believe and who refused, and therefore set themselves against God,

even to the point of killing his son.

And therefore, they were so deliberately aligned with the enemy, that they became the enemy too. And he trampled their blood in this was the days of vengeance, that I believe that Jesus spoke about. Strange things.

And there are stranger things still we'll be looking at. We're going to take a break now. And we'll take what's at the bottom of the sheet of notes in our next lecture.