

The Blood of His Lovingkindness – Isaiah 63:1-14

Introduction – This passage is still reverberating with the significance of words which Jesus declared as fulfilled at His coming into the ministry that would lead to the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension and rule from God's right hand by His Spirit through His church (61:1-3, Luke 4:16ff). Jesus came to establish a New World by bringing an end to the Old World. This is the New Jerusalem, the City we are (60:10-22). God did this through His Servant-Messiah because of His great love for us and for the world (ch 62, John 3:16-17). To come to Jesus is to come to a violent conqueror, a bloody and bloodied Victor, "*the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than Abel*" (Heb 12:24). It is to come to the One Who has conquered you, Who is splattered with your blood that you might be washed in His.

The Blood of His Judgment... (vv1-6) – A man steps into the picture. He is dressed in red apparel and has returned from the center of Edom (v1-3). Someone asks, "*Who is this?*" (v1) and "*Why are your garments red?*" (v2). The garments speak of His glory and strength, for He is righteous, mighty to save (v2). Edom (Esau) was the perpetual enemy of Judah and came to spiritually represent all unbelief which stood against righteous Jacob (believing Israel – see notes from Isaiah 34).

This warrior's robe looks like he has been treading on grapes in a winepress, but it is in fact the blood of his enemies (v3). This has taken place in the day of vengeance and in the year of "*My redeemed.*" (v4). Most telling is that this has all been done by one warrior alone (v3, 5, Matt 26:31). There has been no one else willing and, more importantly, able, and so His own fury brought down His enemies. Metaphors mix and the blood is so deep that they become "*drunk in His fury*" bringing them to a final end (v6).

Vengeance, Judgment, and Redemption – The day of vengeance is also the year of redemption. Some want to push "*the day of vengeance*" and these metaphors all the way to the end of the world in which we live. But what Isaiah has been prophesying to Israel all this time is that their real enemy is not an external enemy. Their real enemy is internal: their chronic rebellion fueled by unbelief and idolatry. This is the picture of a bloody Gospel. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23) and so we must all die. This passage is about the work of the Messiah-Redeemer who frees us from what we were by uniting us to His death that we might be united to Him in His life (Gal 2:20). The blood is therefore our blood, but the blood is on Him because He took our sin upon Himself and became the blood sacrifice for us (2 Cor 5:21). God took your death-warrant and nailed it to the Cross and Jesus bled and died, and that freed you from the principalities and powers of sin and death (Col 2:13-15).

A Harvest of Judgment - But there is the judgment part too. When Christ died, He was killed by an Edomite-king and a representative of the city of Man (Herod and Pontius Pilate). After His ascension, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon His apostles and the world was turned upside down as the Gospel went to all nations (Acts 17:6). During that generation a great tribulation came upon the Christians brought on them by unbelieving, Old Jerusalem. As promised by Jesus, in one generation, the day of vengeance came upon the Old Covenant administration, its temple, its sacrificial system, its priesthood, its city and its walls. It all came down in a bloody judgment. Isaiah 63 is the language of judgment John uses in his apocalypse (Rev 14:19-20, 19:11-13).

...Is the Blood of His Lovingkindness (vv7-14) – And so the picture of the wrath of the Warrior is a song of God's *hesed* (lovingkindness). That lovingkindness is extended to His elect (v8) and "*in all their affliction He was afflicted...*" (v9). For our sins, He bore the just wrath of God. In our persecutions, He is persecuted with us (Matt 23:34, Acts 9:4) and so we will share in His afflictions as well (Phil 3:10, 2 Thess 1:4, 2 Tim 3:12). Through it all, those who are his people will find that "*He bore them and carried them*" (v9). The redeemed are not promised a cushy life here and now, but it is true that "*all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose*" (Rom 8:28). His purpose is bloody, but His bloody garment is a garment of lovingkindness to us who believe. Tragically, in Isaiah's day, and more importantly, in Jesus' day, the majority "*rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit*" (v10). And so Jerusalem fell.

But what is the overall picture? "*He remembered the days of old*" (v11). God remembers. He remembers how He brought Israel out of Egypt under Moses (vv11-13) and all that the promise of Passover entailed. Passover was a bloody sacrifice and a meal of lovingkindness. Another Substitute Firstborn died and we instead are brought out of the house of bondage. In this we find that it is far more important that God remember than that we remember. In our frailty, we forget. But God never forgets. God remembers and He remembers with the blood of His lovingkindness.