

Lamar E. Cooper, Sr.
Interim President
Criswell College

The Servant as God's Messenger of Judgment

Isaiah 63:1-6

Introduction

This song has an unmistakable link with Isaiah 61:2b, which speaks about the Servant's role as the avenger of God's wrath. This song grabs our attention as the specter of the coming Day of Judgment. It is a sobering reminder that the Second Coming of Jesus will be both a day of celebration by those who are saved from wrath, Rom 5:8-9, and a day of fear for those who are still under the wrath of God, see Rev 6:12-17. Isaiah 62:1-12 is not one of the servant songs but it contains a wonderful assurance message of redemption and salvation. It should not be surprising that this affirmation of God's willingness to save is coupled with a reminder of coming judgment. Who could be more appropriate to deliver this message of judgment and salvation than the Servant who was willing to give His own life for us all?

Guess who is coming from Edom in regal, but blood stained robes? 63:1a,b,c

- A figure comes from Edom, in garments that are *chamuts*, Hebrew meaning "bright red." Edom itself means "red" and is associated with Esau and his descendents (Gen 25:24-25; 36:1-43). Died garments of Bozrah is a parallel as it was the capital city of Edom, Gen 36:33.
- The figure is "coming from Edom" and "from Bozrah," which does not clearly identify who he is. It is not until we hear Him speak that we get a clue to His identity. "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." This would be the language of a *goel*, a righteous, mighty warrior, and redeemer. It is not until verses 2 and 3 that we learn why His garments are red.

Guess who has trodden grapes of wrath in the winepress alone? 63:2-3

- Red is the color of blood and the garments are stained with the blood of one who has been to Edom and exacted judgment.
- The language of "treading the winepress" is a figure of judgment that appears in Revelation 14:14-20. Two groups are identified. The first group is the harvest of ripe fruit of the vine, vv. 14-16. The second group is the over ripe, spoiled, or rotten fruit that is cast into the winepress of the wrath of God, vv. 17-20. The figure of treading the winepress as judgment also is found in Lamentations 1:8-17, esp. vv. 15-17.

Guess who alone brings final judgment to all? 63:3-6

- Edom, is a typological lesson to remember. Edom is Esau's descendents who along with descendents of Ammon and Moab, became bitter enemies of

God's people Israel. Why is Edom singled out for special dishonorable mention? Descendants of Esau forgave Jacob, but his descendants harbored a fierce hatred of Jews. Amos tells the story in 1:11-12 and Obadiah gives even more details in his book, vv. 10-14. So Edom is marked for severe judgment because of its hatred of Israel, see Isa 21:11-12; Jer 49:7-22; Ezek 25:12-14; 35:1-15; cf. Amos 1:11-12.

Guess who alone can bring eternal redemption and salvation? 63:1d, 4b, 5

- Notice the blend of judgment and salvation in this passage. In v. 1c salvation of the righteous one who is "mighty to save," is presented. Yet, it is mentioned in the context of judgment in v. 1a, 1b. In verse 4b again there is judgment in 4a followed in righteousness and is mighty to save? Again in verse 5 there is salvation followed in verse 6 by judgment. This is the constant dual aspect of the character of Yahweh. He is a God of mercy and grace, but also of justice and judgment.
- We can see this dichotomy in Rev 5:1-14 where the Lamb, our Redeemer is presented. In Revelation 6:14-17 there is a dramatic picture of judgment to come, see attached chart that illustrates the need for repentance available now, but will no longer be available in the coming Day of Final Judgment. This chart also shows us that Grace and judgment are part of God's character. Each person makes the choice of one or the other in this life, and our eternal destiny is sealed, see Lk 16:19-31.

Conclusion

There are three lessons in this song:

- (1) God's people are an object of the world's disdain and hatred. There appears to be no redress for those who ridicule and trample on the holy things of God, but He will have the final word.
- (2) We have God's assurance in that day, every evil will be exposed and every wrong made right, for He alone is our avenger.
- (3) He is a God of mercy, grace, and justice, but He also is a God of gravity, judgment, and vengeance.
- (4) Now is the day of salvation: the night comes when no one will be saved.