# Lesson 39 Isaiah 59:1-21 The Conqueror Comes

# Introduction

Where are we in the Book of the Conqueror? Isaiah 59 overlaps our first major section and second major section of the book. The Book of the Conqueror covers chapters 56-66. There are two key structural features. First, the beginning and ending of the book depict the inclusion of Gentiles. Second, there is a parallel reference to the coming conqueror on either side of the book's center. One of those references occurs at the end of our present chapter, chapter 59. The other occurs at the beginning of chapter 63.

Following Motyer's structure, those two references to the coming conqueror make up the beginning and end of the book's middle section. That means our first section ends half way through chapter 59, and the middle section starts half way through chapter 59. We are going to do the whole chapter in this lesson, so that we can see how the condemnation of sin in Judah transitions into the vision of the coming conqueror.

The first major section of the Book of the Conqueror has contrasted the ideal vision of God's people with the actual reality of Judah in Isaiah's present context. We've seen two kinds of idolatry. The idolatry on the left, that embraces the progressive, multitude of pagan gods espoused by the nations surrounding Judah; and the idolatry on the right, that maintains conservative forms of worship while treating God as a force that can be manipulated through prayer and fasting.

Chapter 58 described the kind of fast that pleases God, the putting aside of time and money to feed to poor, shelter the homeless. Good works are not a more positive way to manipulate what we want out of God. The chapter ended with a realignment of desires. Religion is not about asserting our agenda. True religion is submission to right relationship with God, where we acknowledge His desires, His agenda, His glory as central. We want to bring our desires into line with His.

That is true religion. The people of Judah are far from this desired spiritual state. They are after personal well-being; the fulfillment of their own desires; their own agenda, whatever it takes, whether it's pagan idolatry or hypocritical Yahweh worship. In chapter 59:1-13 Isaiah lifts the veil from the sinful human heart. We are all separated from right relationship with God. There is no hope to be found in human society, and so God arms Himself for justice. He girds himself to bring salvation. That's going to be the vision of 59:14-21.

So, we start first with the denunciation of Judah: 59:1-13. We will address this denunciation as accusation, description, and confession.

## Accused, guilty, penitent, helpless (59:1-13)

## Accusation 59:1-4

Here's the accusation, Isaiah 59:1-4. Isaiah accuses the people directly using the second person plural "you" in the first three verses, and then summarizing in the 4<sup>th</sup> verse.

<sup>1</sup> Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it	Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.
cannot save;	
<sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have made a separation	between you and your God

- <sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have made a separation
   And your sins have hidden His face
- <sup>3</sup> For your hands are defiled with blood Your lips have spoken falsehood,
- <sup>4</sup> No one sues righteously They trust in confusion and speak lies;

between you and your God, from you so that He does not hear. And your fingers with iniquity; Your tongue mutters wickedness. and no one pleads honestly. They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity.

In chapter 58, the people of Judah fast and pray for God's protection and provision. Then they ask, "Why have we fasted and you do not see?" Isaiah gives them the answer, "You fast in hypocrisy." Here is the answer again. Let's be very clear about why you do not experience the goodness of God. Verse 1, it is not because the Lord's hand is too short to save. God can reach you. His power has no limits. It's also not because His ear is so dull He cannot hear. God knows what you're saying. He can save you. He does hear you. What's the problem, then?

Verse 2, "your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God." You live your lives in unrepentant sin, doing what you please. Sin separates. Sin divides you from relationship with God. Your sins have caused God to hide His face, so that He does not hear or does not respond to the requests that He does hear. Remember in 58:7, Isaiah exhorted his audience, "do not hide from your own flesh" - don't turn away from the poor in society. That same language is here. Your turning away from those in need is mirrored by God turning His face from your cries for help.

Verse 3, "your hands are defiled with blood." That was the charge way back in 1:15, "Your hands are covered with blood as you lift them up in false prayer to me." Isaiah employs powerful parallelism in this accusation from hands to fingers and lips to tongue.

<sup>3</sup> For your hands are defiled with blood
 Your lips have spoken falsehood,
 And your fingers with iniquity;
 Your tongue mutters wickedness.

Isaiah develops the charge of false lips more specifically in verse 4a using legal language.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> No one sues righteously

and no one pleads honestly.

The courts cease to be a means for justice in your society because no one can be trusted. You manipulate God for your own ends with your false religious behavior, you manipulate each other with your lies, and you manipulate the institution of the courts. No one goes to court to sue righteously, no one pleads their own case honestly. Verse 4b,

They trust in confusion and speak lies;

They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity.

Where can one find justice in such a society? The sin of the people has separated them from the blessings of knowing God. Yet, they are so deep in their own sin, there is no hope for them to come out of it again. Isaiah moves from direct accusation to damning description.

# Description 59:5-8

This is 5-8. Note that Isaiah shifts from the use of the direct "you" to the third person plural "they".

- <sup>5</sup> They hatch adders' eggs He who eats of their eggs dies,
- <sup>6</sup> Their webs will not become clothing, Their works are works of iniquity,
- <sup>7</sup> Their feet run to evil, Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity,
- <sup>8</sup> They do not know the way of peace, They have made their paths crooked,

and weave the spider's web; And from that which is crushed a snake breaks forth. Nor will they cover themselves with their works; And an act of violence is in their hands. And they hasten to shed innocent blood; Devastation and destruction are in their highways. And there is no justice in their tracks; Whoever treads on them does not know peace.

Isaiah's imagery immediately conjures up foreboding. "They hatch adders' eggs and weave the spider's web." Could you introduce the villain of a story any better? Isaiah develops both ideas of egg and web. On the one hand, the adders' eggs are poisonous. Whoever eats them dies. That's what becomes of those who swallow the words and ways put forth. But if you try and crush their plans, little poisonous snakes break forth. How do you stop the schemes at work in this society?

They are poisonous but ultimately also without substance. They weave webs that will not become clothing. They cannot pretend to be righteous. God sees through their works. They can't wear them. Past whatever good may be asserted, God sees who they really are, hands feet, and thoughts.

- Their works are works of iniquity,
- Their feet run to evil,
   Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity,

And an act of violence is in their hands. And they hasten to shed innocent blood; Devastation and destruction are in their highways.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Robert Alter. *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2019) 1991.

They say they want peace. But it is a selfish desire for personal well-being. They don't want to do the things that bring peace. They say they want justice, but only justice applied to their enemies. Their plans, their systems of thought, their actions, they all speak against what they say they want. Verse 8,

<sup>8</sup> They do not know the way of peace,
 They have made their paths crooked,
 And there is no justice in their tracks;
 Whoever treads on them does not know peace.

And remember from our past context, peace is, "shalom," it's maybe bigger than we use the word, "peace." It does mean peace in a relationship, but it means well-being in every aspect of life. Now, it is easy to judge this fallen society. And it is right to do so. It is right to judge them and to see the parallels in our own society that we judge. But it is wrong to believe we escape judgement by comparison. We may not do the same works to the same degree; we may not have fallen so far down the moral continuum. But we are fallen, all of us, and none of us stands before God because our own works have succeeded in clothing us in righteousness.

Paul takes this passage from Isaiah and applies it to all human beings. This is not just one society. This is the darkness of the human heart. Before that, Paul first condemns pagan society in Romans 1:18-32. Then he turns the light on those who consider themselves moral in society. Romans 2:1,

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Now, these Jews he's talking to don't practice the exact same things, not to the same degree. But they do fall far short of the glory of God in their hearts, in their minds, in their hypocrisy, in their legalism. Paul sums up in Romans 3:9-18. He quotes from our present Isaiah 59, also from Isaiah 53 and some verses from the Psalms woven in. The echo of our present passage really stands out.

<sup>9</sup> What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; <sup>10</sup> as it is written,

	"There is none righteous, not even one;	<sup>11</sup> There is none who understands,
	There is none who seeks for God;	<sup>12</sup> All have turned aside, together they have
		become useless;
	There is none who does good,	There is not even one."
3	"Their throat is an open grave,	With their tongues they keep deceiving,"
	"The poison of asps is under their lips";	<sup>14</sup> "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";
5	"Their feet are swift to shed blood,	<sup>16</sup> Destruction and misery are in their paths,
7	And the path of peace they have not known."	<sup>18</sup> "There is no fear of God before their eyes."
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Are we any better than they? That's how Paul starts. As stark as this damning of human nature is, Paul includes himself in the accusation. Are we any better? Isaiah did the same thing back in chapter 6, when he described his vision of God. Experiencing the holiness of God, he cries out in 6:5.

"Woe is me, for I am ruined! And I live among a people of unclean lips; Because I am a man of unclean lips, For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

He compares himself not to the unrighteousness of his society, but to the holy, holy, holiness of God, and he is overwhelmed by his own depravity. The description there in chapter 6 of a people with unclean lips fits this present description. These are denounced as a people whose lips speak falsehood, whose tongues mutter wickedness; a people unable to plead honestly, speaking lies.

There is a strong connection between chapter 6 and chapter 59. And even though Isaiah speaks the words of God as the prophet of God, he knows that his lips, too, are unclean. Strikingly, the confession that follows is in first person plural. We have already shifted from the second person plural "you" in the accusation at the beginning of the chapter to the third person plural "they" in the description in the middle of the chapter. Now we're going to get to first person plural "we" in the confession. It's not just the "I", this is not just Isaiah's own confession. This is "we." He is speaking as a representative of fallen Judah.

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15 17

# Confession 59:9-13

And in this confession unclean lips are not the only fault of this people. Unclean lips are representative of a corrupted heart. That connection is going to come out in the last phrase. The confession is verses 9-13.

- <sup>9</sup> Therefore justice is far from us,
   We hope for light, but behold, darkness,
- <sup>10</sup> We grope along the wall like blind men, We stumble at midday as in the twilight,
- <sup>11</sup> All of us growl like bears, We hope for justice, but there is none,
- <sup>12</sup> For our transgressions are multiplied before You, For our transgressions are with us,
- <sup>13</sup> Transgressing and denying the LORD, Speaking oppression and revolt,

And righteousness does not overtake us; For brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope like those who have no eyes; Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men. And moan sadly like doves;

- For salvation, but it is far from us.
- And our sins testify against us;
- And we know our iniquities:
- And turning away from our God,
- Conceiving in and uttering from the heart lying words.

Justice, righteousness, and salvation are used as parallel terms in 9a and 11b to create an inclusio.

<sup>9a</sup> Therefore justice is far from us,

that's 9a. 11b,

<sup>11b</sup> We hope for justice, but there is none,

And righteousness does not overtake us;

For salvation, but it is far from us.

This was the question that followed the hypocritical fasting of chapter 58. They had fasted as a nation that had done righteousness. They expect the blessing of the righteous. But they are not a nation that has done righteousness. Far from it. They say, "We have fasted," and they ask, "Why have you not seen? Why have you not blessed us?" Where is justice? Where is salvation? That lack of blessing is described here, between 9a and 11b. Verset by verset, the people are pictured as a man groping in the darkness. Isaiah's imagery stands out for itself. As I read it again, imagine each verset as a frame-by-frame movemenent, like a short video clip. Each verset gives you one frame of a video, adding just a little extra information as you go, and there is movement.

We hope for light, but behold, darkness,

- <sup>10</sup> We grope along the wall like blind men,
- We stumble at midday as in the twilight,
- <sup>11</sup> All of us growl like bears,

For brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope like those who have no eyes; Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men. And moan sadly like doves;

The people cannot find protection from evil. Evil is not punished, it's not stopped. People continue to hurt people. That is true within the society of Judah and it is true outside the society of Judah. They have no protection in their society. They have no protection from other societies. They will oppress and hurt each other, and by others they will be hurt and oppressed. No one will bring about justice. No one will bring about righteous action. No one will bring salvation. And they can do nothing about it. They grope in darkness, they stumble about. Blind to how moral reality works, they can only growl in distrust of fellow man and moan in despair at their own plight.

The language of gloom here takes us back again to chapter 8: those who walked in gloom cursed their king, they cursed their God. Similar to the beginning of chapter 8, the confession of the prophet has given up blaming God and owns responsibility for the failure of society. Blame does not belong to God. The repentant man understands where fault lies. Verses 12-13,

12	For our transgressions are multiplied before You,	And our sins testify against us;
	For our transgressions are with us,	And we know our iniquities:
13	Transgressing and denying the LORD,	And turning away from our God,
	Speaking oppression and revolt.	Conceiving in and uttering from the heart lying words.

A person must come to this point before they can move any further. It is the poor in spirit who will be blessed. We are all poor. We just have to realize it. We cannot stand on our own good works, pointing the finger at the corrupt, because we are all corrupt. So this righteous man's prayer for society recognizes his own failures together with the failures of his society. We are all bankrupt. What can we do? Where does hope come from?

This is how we end the first major section of the Book of the Conqueror. We begin with an ideal vision of the people of God in 56,1-6. It cannot be accomplished by human beings, because we always bring evil with us. Who is going to defeat the evil? Who is going to establish justice?

A divine conqueror comes. We will address this vision of the coming conqueror in three sections. We begin with the state of human affairs. Then we have a vision of divine commitment. And we end with the presence of a Covenant mediator – one who will mediate between God and man.

## Divine Commitment to Salvation and Vengeance (59:14-21)

#### The State of Human Affairs 59:14-15a

The three lines of 59:14-15a sum up the current state of affairs already described in the prophet's confession.

<sup>14</sup> Justice is turned back,	And righteousness stands far away;
For truth has stumbled in the street,	And uprightness cannot enter.
<sup>15</sup> Yes, truth is lacking;	And he who turns himself aside from evil makes
	himself a prev.

This is human society. This is the city of man without God. How does God respond to this fallen, broken, evil state of human affairs?

Divine Commitment to Salvation and Vengeance 59:15b-20

He responds with divine commitment to salvation and to vengeance. This is 15b-20.

	Now the LORD saw, and it was displeasing in His sight	that there was no justice.
16	And He saw that there was no man,	And was astonished that there was no one to intercede;
	Then His own arm brought salvation to Him,	And His righteousness upheld Him.
17	He put on righteousness like a breastplate,	And a helmet of salvation on His head;
	And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing	And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.
18	According to their deeds, so He will repay,	Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His
		enemies;
	To the coastlands He wil	l make recompense.
19	So they will fear from the west	the name of the LORD
And His glory from the rising of the sun,		
	For He will come like a rushing stream	Which the wind of the LORD drives.
20	"A Redeemer will come to Zion,	And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,"
	declares the	e Lord.

God's astonishment that there is none to intercede cannot mean that God is somehow unaware of the spiritual state of His people. Attributing astonishment to God is a way to picture how clearly a morally good vision sees the absurdity and self-destructiveness of wickedness. The good is always somewhat astonished by evil. And evil just does not get it.

That there is no man to intercede elevates the problem to one of ultimate justice and righteousness. When God asked who would go for Him back in chapter 6, Isaiah said, "Here am I." He became a human intercessor for his people. But he is not enough. When God decided to free His people from Babylon, He raised up Cyrus, a human redeemer. But what human can fully solve the problem of human wickedness and oppression? Who can establish fair and lasting justice? Who can banish evil once and for all? No one.

Just as the need for righteous and lasting government requires an ideal King and the need for righteous atonement requires an ideal Servant, so also the need for impartial, absolute and lasting justice requires an ideal Conqueror.

It displeases God's moral nature that there is no justice. And He sees that no man can step up to meet the need. So His own arm brings salvation. Isaiah expresses the matter as though it is complete. God has already done it. His righteousness has upheld Him. Once God makes a divine commitment to accomplish salvation, the end is final. It will happen. But the rest of the text indicates we are considering a future work.

Verse 17 is the image that lies behind Paul's famous spiritual armor passage to the Ephesians. Paul may have assumed his listeners would have envisioned the armor of a contemporary Roman soldier. But his language connects back to the image of God as divine warrior. Verse 17,

<sup>17</sup> He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head;

And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.

God does not array Himself in military dress as an act of defense. He is preparing to attack. He acts in vengeance against people who have acted wickedly. That's clear in verse 18.

<sup>18</sup> According to *their* deeds, so He will repay, enemies; To the coastlands He will make recompense.
Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies;

The adversaries mentioned here at first were those who are outside of Judah. The coastlands have long been held by Judah's enemies, the closest being the Philistines, and the cities of Tyre and Sidon. God will demand recompense from them. But His reach is long. It is not only the coastlands who should fear His wrath. Verse 19,

19	So they will fear from the west	the name of the LORD	
	And His gl	And His glory from the rising of the sun,	
	For He will come like a rushing stream	Which the wind of the LORD drives.	

From east to west, the enemies of God will fear Him. He will come like a rushing stream. In the wilderness surrounding Judah, trickling streams can fill suddenly when rain comes. The dry ravine becomes a rushing torrent. The waters rise so quickly there is nowhere to go, no time to climb out of the water's reach. The reference to a stream inevitably reminds us of the great rivers to the north and the south. In chapter 7, the Assyrian army was depicted as the river Euphrates overflowing her banks to flood Judah. God's wrath, when it comes, does not come slowly. It rushes along, driven by the wind of the Lord.

To claim that God will be feared has a double meaning, especially when communicated along with the idea of His name and His glory. Name and glory indicate the revelation of God's nature. Fear may be a response of enemies who cower or flee at the terrible might of His vengeance. But fear is also the right response of worship for those overcome by awe at the glorious revelation of His nature. Both of these responses are included in the assertion, "They will fear from the west the name of the Lord and his glory from the rising of the son."

One way or the other, all the nations of the Earth will fear the name of the Lord. So will His own people.

<sup>20</sup> "A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,"

declares the LORD.

The Redeemer is not pictured as coming not to lay down His life. This Redeemer is pictured as coming to destroy evil. He is not the redeemer of all Jews. He is the redeemer of those who turn from transgression in Jacob. Just as with the nations in verse 19, we have to imagine a potential double response in verse 20. there are those who turn from transgression, who will be redeemed, and there are those who will not. And they will suffer God's wrath as His enemy.

As the reference to east and west covers all Gentiles, the reference to Jacob covers all Jews. Isaiah's vision is for all of Jacob, though the Northern Kingdom of Israel has already been destroyed, he is not speaking only to Judah. When he uses the term, "Jacob," all twelve tribes are in view, and it makes us think back to the promises made to the patriarchs.

The Conqueror comes. When will He come? How will He come? On whom will He pour out His wrath? What will be the result?

These are questions Isaiah will develop more in chapters 60-62. We do have one bit of very intriguing information left in the last verse of chapter 59. This is 59:21.

The Promise of a Covenant Mediator 59:21

<sup>21</sup> "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever."

Jewish scholar Robert Alter affirms what you will probably see when you look at the text in your own Bible. This verse is not formatted as poetry. Alter calls it, "a prose epilogue." Also, if you're reading in English, that only has one "you" which could be plural or singular, you might not notice that we have just switched to the singular "you." Unlike the "you" of accusation at the beginning of chapter 58, which was plural, this "you," all the way through, is singular. "This is my covenant with THEM." "My Spirit which is upon YOU" - that's one person. "My words which I put in YOUR mouth." It's a singular "you." "From the mouth of your offspring." So, who is the "you"? Alter rejects the claim that the "you" is the prophet and the offspring are his "disciples." He understands the "you" and the "offspring" to be the Jews. He writes this, "Similar formulations in Deuteronomy and elsewhere clearly indicate the spirit of God that will continue to invest the covenanted people for all time, and there is no warrant for the use of 'seed' in the sense of 'disciple' rather than as a term for biological offspring. 'Seed' in precisely this sense repeatedly figures in the covenantal promises to Abraham."<sup>2</sup>

First, I find it interesting that Alter does not give any space to critical scholarship that this prose verse is a later insertion into Isaiah's text. That's what a lot of scholars will say, this verse just doesn't fit. But Alter knows literature. He is a professor at Stanford, and he is not getting into the Christian view of the text. Still, he finds the verse a fitting epilogue where it is. That's interesting. Second, I find it interesting that in that quote I just read he does not actually explain the singular "you", except to say that it is not Isaiah because the verse is clearly using the language of Old Testament Covenant, and "offspring" are not the disciples of Isaiah, because "offspring" in Old Testament Covenant language indicates the biological children of Abraham. And that makes sense.

The term, "seed," does point to the Abrahamic covenant, particularly the language God used to reaffirm the covenant in Genesis 22:17-18. Speaking to Abraham, God says,

<sup>17</sup> indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

"Seed" in that context, what Abraham would have understood is that "seed" refers to his descendants. New Testament writers can understand the term "seed" with a range of meaning. In Galatians 3:16, Paul understands "seed" as singular, referring to Jesus Christ. He is the promised child, the seed through whom the nations will be blessed. That use of "seed" points even further back to God's promise to Eve in Genesis 3:15, that her seed would crush the serpent's head. Paul does not use the word "seed" in Romans 4 when he describes the offspring of Abraham. But he does say that Abraham is both the father of the circumcised and the father of the uncircumcised. He is the father of all who believe. He is not just the father of the biological children. I think it fair to say that Paul could understand a singular use of "seed" as referring to Jesus; plural use of the word "seed" that refers to all who have become children of God by faith, Jew and Gentile. All those uses of "seed" are fair, depending on the context.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Alter 1993.

Now, because of Alter I've skipped ahead in our verse to talk about seed. I need to come back to the two more striking aspects of the verse: the reference to covenant, and the singular use of "you". They are connected, so we start with covenant. Isaiah uses the word "covenant" four times in the Book of the Servant. All for uses occur in the confirmation text that comes right after one of the four Servant Songs. Covenant is connected every time to the singular Servant.

So, starting in 42,6, which affirms the first Servant Song, "...I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations."

49:8, affirming the Second Servant song, "...I will keep you for a covenant of the people, to restore the land..."

54:10, affirming the fourth Servant Song, "...My lovingkindness will not be removed from you and my covenant of peace shall not be shaken..."

And 55:3, a second instance affirming the fourth Servant Song, "...I will make an everlasting covenant with you according the faithful mercies shown to David."

The covenant references connect us back to the Suffering Servant. And something else also does that in this verse. The assertion, "My Spirit is upon you," points us back both to 42:1, "I will put My Spirit upon him." And also back to the Messianic King in 11:2, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him." The Messianic King, who is also the Suffering Servant, he is the singular "you" of this text.

Okay. Listen again to the promise God makes in verse 21, "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD. This is a God thing, a God Covenant. "As for me." There was no man. So God took on Himself to act. This is "My covenant with them,' says the Lord." He goes on, "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth." He is speaking to the Messianic King, to the Suffering Servant. There is a singular Covenant mediator, the "you" of this text. And He is the Messianic King. He is the Suffering Servant.

But the promise is not only about Him, but also about His offspring, His seed. And this is not the first time that seed is connected to the Suffering Servant. Chapter 53:10, "He will render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days." How does He see His offspring and prolong His days when He is clearly going to die for the sins of humanity? He dies and He lives. His offspring are those who have believed. This promise here in 59:21 also applies to them. Just as the Spirit is upon Him, the Covenant mediator, and the Word of God will not leave His mouth, nor will it leave, "the mouth of His offspring, not even from the mouth of His offspring's offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever."

God will establish a Covenant of peace. A Covenant that fulfills the covenants to Abraham and to David. He will establish that Covenant through a mediator who is the Messianic King and who is the Suffering Servant. God's Spirit and Word will be on His Covenant mediator. But not only on Him. God's Spirit will be on His offspring – those who believe in Him - and His Word will proceed from their mouths. These offspring are the New Covenant people of God, established on the day of Pentecost as the Church, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the preaching the word of Good News. This is not the last time we are going to see this vision. We are going to come back to it at the very end of chapter 66.

But for now, let's conclude with a final thought on how this final verse is going to transition us from this vision of God as divine warrior, which has come before verse 21, to a light rising in Zion, which is where we began in chapter 60.

## Conclusion

So in chapter 59, it is God who puts on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation is on His head. But as New Testament theology makes clear, there is no easy separation between nature and work of God the Father, and the nature and work of God the Son.

So, here we are told, "God saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede." Will there always be "no man?" Will there always be "none to intercede?" No. The ideal

King we saw is both man and God. The ideal Servant is both man and God. The coming Conqueror is both man and God.

The reference to the arm of the Lord most immediately communicates the strength of God. But it is also used as the introduction of the fourth Servant Song, "Who has believed our message? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The Suffering Servant is the arm of the Lord. Here in Isaiah 59 it definitely implies God's strength as He takes on Himself the task of abolishing evil and establishing justice. But I cannot escape the echo of the son of God in these verses, especially when we get to verse 21 and the Covenant mediator.

And it's not a stretch to imagine this divine, anointed Conqueror as Jesus Christ. Yes, He is the Lamb. He is also the Lion. The Suffering Servant who died on the cross in the Gospel is also depicted as divine Conqueror in the book of Revelation. Listen to Revelation 19:11-16 and wonder if this is Jesus we are talking about in Isaiah.

<sup>11</sup> And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. <sup>13</sup> *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. <sup>16</sup> And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

At His first coming He arrayed Himself in the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation to do war with the serpent of old. He broke the power of sin at the cross. Satan is defeated. The war is won. And thought the outcome may be inevitable, there are still battles to fight before the end. We who are His offspring have been included into a covenant of God's own making. We have been anointed by His Spirit. The word of Good News has been put into our mouth. Following His example, we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation, and pick up the shield of faith. Doing so, we stand firm against spiritual attack by the Evil One. But our armor is not only defensive. Just as the Lord our God moves forward in action against the forces of evil, the Word of God has been put into our mouths as the sword of the Spirit, to participate with Him in His redemptive mission to set captives free. He has come once. He will come again. We do not wait for Him passively, because He does not wait passively. He is feeding the hungry, healing the sick, restoring the broken hearted, proclaiming the Good News of forgiveness, restoration, and eternal life. He is the coming Conqueror, who defeats evil and restores humanity. We are called to join Him in His mission before He comes again to consummate the eradication of evil for all time, and to establish eternal justice, eternal righteousness, eternal salvation. The end is sure. The coming of the Conqueror makes it so.