

Lesson 42 Isaiah 61:10-63:6 Four Songs of the Conqueror

Introduction

A Fifth Servant Song

As we continue on in Isaiah 61, it is going to be helpful to consider a claim some scholars make about our previous text. This claim will help us consider the relationship between 61:1-9, and our longer text for this lesson starting in 61:10.

Some commentators claim 61:1-3 is a fifth Servant Song.¹ 61:1-3 is the passage from our last lesson that Jesus applied to himself after He stood and read in the synagogue. And remember, we had four Servant Songs in the Book of the Servant, Isaiah 40-55. These culminated with the famous fourth Song in Isaiah 53. Themes in each of the four Songs appear in 61:1-3. In the first Servant Song Isaiah emphasizes the anointing of the servant; Isaiah 42:1, “I have put my Spirit on him.” In the second and third Servant Songs Isaiah emphasizes ministry of the word; Isaiah 49:2, “He has made my mouth like a sharp sword” and 50:4, “the Lord has given me the tongue of disciples ... to sustain the weary one with a word.” And in the fourth Servant Song the Servant brings healing; Isaiah 53:5, “by his scourging we are healed.” These three themes are all present in 61:1-3. The speaker is anointed with the Holy Spirit; He conducts a ministry of the Word, proclaiming good news; and He heals, restoring sight to the blind.

This song shares common themes with the Servant Songs. This song also shares a common subject, Jesus. The New Testament makes that interpretation for us. Jesus connected Himself to 61:1 with His synagogue declaration in Luke 4:21. Luke later connects Jesus to the Servant in Acts 8:35, when Philip explains Isaiah 53 to the Ethiopian Eunuch. So there is good reason to identify this passage as a fifth Servant Song.

But we cannot base that claim only on the similarities. We also have to consider differences between the four Songs that came before, and this Song.

In His quote of 61:2, Jesus intentionally left out the phrase, “day of vengeance.” That makes it easier for us to connect this figure to the Suffering Servant who brings about the favorable year of the Lord through His sacrifice. The omission seems to be an intentional move by Jesus, not to reject the day of vengeance reality, but to separate the day of vengeance from the work he was about during His first coming. When we look at the context of Isaiah, the day of vengeance stands as a significant theme for chapters 59-63. Though the work of liberation is present in 61:1-3, the context around 61:1-3 points further ahead past the initial work of liberation on the cross, to the final work of liberation that removes death and sin completely. The vision of a final, glorious Zion, an ideal society does not come about apart from the action of the Divine Warrior.

I think Motyer has been correct to emphasize the shift from Suffering Servant to Anointed Conqueror in this third book of Isaiah that started in chapter 56. Jesus is the lamb of God who dies to take away our sin. He is also the lion of Judah who completely vanquishes sin and death. He is both. But by overly stating the connection here to the Suffering Servant, we are in danger of omitting the conquering facet of Jesus’ nature: that He is a conquering king who will come to exact vengeance. It is important to notice that, after the fourth Servant Song in Isaiah 53, there is no description of suffering for the divine warrior figure that comes later.

Let’s step back and consider the presence of Jesus in the big picture flow of Isaiah. The birth of Jesus is announced in the Book of the King; the death of Jesus is described in the Book of the Servant; and the reign of Jesus is depicted in the Book of the Conqueror. The first book points towards two separate works of Jesus. The Messiah’s eternal reign over a holy people requires first that He overcome for them the penalty of sin. There must be spiritual redemption. He does that through the

¹ Tom Constable, *Constable’s Notes: Isaiah 61:1-3*, <https://netbible.org/bible/Isaiah+61>, accessed April 21, 2003.

cross as the Suffering Servant. The Messiah’s eternal reign then requires the complete removal of sin and death as a reality in society. He does that as an anointed conqueror who cast out wickedness.

Our present chapters are focused on this latter work of the Messiah, when He comes to earth again. Instead of naming 61:1-3 as a fifth Servant Song, we do better naming it as a Song of the Anointed Conqueror.

Songs of the Conqueror

Motyer, unsurprisingly, sees structure in these chapters that parallels our structure in the Book of the Servant. As we had four Songs of the Servant, Motyer sees four Songs of the Conqueror. And just as each Servant Song was followed by a confirmation of the Servant’s work, Motyer understands the four Songs of the Conqueror to be followed by confirmation of the Conqueror’s work.

He recognizes the two visions of the Divine Warrior to be the First and Fourth Songs of the Conqueror. The First Song includes both the first vision of the Heavenly Warrior in 59:15-20, and the statement of a Covenant Mediator in 59:21. That song is followed in chapter 60 by a description of glorious Zion. The Second Song is the passage Jesus applied to himself in 61:1-3 and, as we saw in our previous lesson, that Song is also followed by a description of glorious Zion. The Third Song of an Anointed Conqueror comes at the beginning of our present lesson in 61:10-62:7 and, again, will be followed by a description of glorious Zion in 62:8-12. The Fourth and final Song is the second Divine Warrior passage that comes in 63:1-6. That Song is not followed by a description of glorious Zion, though we could take the rest of the book, 63:7-66:24, to include that description. Later we’re going to get the language of the New Heaven and the New Earth. If you would like to see Motyer’s chart of the four Songs, I’ve included it in the “Isaiah Structure Charts” document under “Isaiah Resources” at observetheword.com.

The Coming of the Anointed Conqueror 59:14-63:6					
Divine Commitment to Salvation and Vengeance 59:14-20	The Covenant Mediator 59:21	The Coming Glory 60:1-22	Transforming Power, Present and Future 61:1-9	The Commitment of the Anointed One 61:10-62:12	The Day of Vengeance and Victory 63:1-6
The Four Songs of the Anointed Conqueror					
59:14–60:22		61:1–9		61:10–62:12	63:1–6
Preface: situation (59:14–15a) and reaction (59:15b–20)		An Anointed One Good news at the time of salvation and vengeance (61:1–3)		The work of salvation and righteousness gladly undertaken (61:10–62:7)	The day of vengeance and the year of salvation (63:1–6)
An Anointed One Covenant-mediator (59:21)		Glorious Zion		Glorious Zion	
Glorious Zion		Resident people: the Lord’s priests, the servant nations (61:4–9)		Secure for ever, the peoples gather, the Savior comes (62:8–12)	
The gathering people from all the world, the servant nations (60:1–22)					

Alec Motyer. *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (InterVarsity Press, 1996).

I do not know whether Motyer is correct to recognize four Anointed Conqueror songs that parallel the four Servant Songs. Whether that was Isaiah’s intention or not is above my pay grade to say, but the observation that there are multiple songs about a single individual in 59-63 is valid, and that observation raises two important questions of interpretation. First, who is the subject of each of the four songs? And second, what is the relationship between the subject of each song and the following description of God’s glorified people?

Considering the identity of the individual in each song, we saw in the first song an interesting tension between Yahweh, who girds Himself to save because there is no man to stand up for Israel, and then the declaration in 59:21 that there is a man who will stand up as a covenant mediator. Then, with the second song in 61:1-3, we have been helped by Jesus who identified Himself as the individual subject of the song.

Concerning the relationship of the speaker to glorified Zion, we have seen in chapters 60 and 61 a direct link between the work of the speaker and a transformed community. That transformed community then reflects the glory of God out for others to see.

We will see a similar pattern in 61:10-62:12 with a third song about an individual speaker followed by a description of glorified Zion. The pattern continues in 63:1-6 with a fourth song about an individual speaker and no following description of Zion.

For this lesson, we are addressing all three these passages: first the third song; then the description of Zion that follows the third song; and finally, the fourth song. We start with the third Song of the Conqueror in Isaiah 61:10-62:7.

Isaiah 61:10-62:12 The Commitment of the Anointed One

The Third Song of the Conqueror 61:10-62:7

¹⁰ I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,	My soul will exult in my God; He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise	And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, To spring up before all the nations.
¹ For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness,	And for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, And her salvation like a torch that is burning.
² The nations will see your righteousness, And you will be called by a new name	And all kings your glory; Which the mouth of the LORD will designate.
³ You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,	And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
⁴ It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," But you will be called, "My delight is in her," For the LORD delights in you,	Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; And your land, "Married"; And to Him your land will be married.
⁵ For as a young man marries a virgin, And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,	So your sons will marry you; So your God will rejoice over you.
⁶ On your walls, O Jerusalem, All day and all night You who remind the LORD,	I have appointed watchmen; they will never keep silent. take no rest for yourselves;
⁷ And give Him no rest	until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Our first verse sounds like a Psalm. "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God." It is tempting to immediately go into Psalm mode and assume this song applies to us as believers. And it could. I could say this,

¹⁰ I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,	My soul will exult in my God; He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
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That's what happened when you placed your faith in Jesus. He covered you with the robe of His own righteousness. He gave you wedding clothes to wear. But this song is not about us. It is about the one who is speaking. Well, who is speaking?

The 'I' could be Isaiah. In chapter 6, he gave us his vision of Holy God in the first person, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted..." Thinking about whether or not this is Isaiah reminds me of the Ethiopian's question to Philip regarding Isaiah 53. He asked, "Of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else (Acts 8:34)?" It is a reasonable question.

We also have to wonder whether the individual "I" personifies corporate Israel. Though the context will help us discount that possibility. This speaker has been clothed by God with salvation and righteousness in verse 10, which links chiasmatically with 62:10, where he states his goal to bring about

In the context of Isaiah, when does this happen? In the context of Isaiah, the language of being forsaken makes us think of exile to Babylon, and restoration makes us think of the return from Babylon. Broadening our historical lens to consider Israel's history after the birth of Jesus, we might conclude she was forsaken in 70 AD with the sack of Jerusalem by Rome, and not married again to the land until Jews returned and formed the state of Israel after World War II. But neither of those historical restorations brought about a new kind of glorious people who could live with God forever in a blessed, sinless ideal state in the way Zion has been described in chapters 60 and 61.

Isaiah uses the historical instances of exile and return to point ahead towards a final and absolute restoration. The people of God might rightly be described as the bride of Christ. We are already united to Him. But it is also right to say that the consummation of that marriage has not yet taken place. We are already His: we have begun the process of transformation, but we are not yet completely transformed. We are not established as a glorified, sinless people who can live in unbroken covenant with our King. That's future. This is a picture of glorified people of God in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

This song began in 61:10 like a Psalm of praise, with the speaker exulting in God because of an action God had already taken. God had already clothed the speaker in righteousness and salvation. The speaker was so clothed to bring about salvation and righteousness for God's people represented by God's city Zion: Jerusalem. The song ends in 62:6 and 7 with an exhortation to prayer for the realization of this purpose.

⁶ On your walls, O Jerusalem, All day and all night You who remind the LORD,	I have appointed watchmen; they will never keep silent. take no rest for yourselves;
⁷ And give Him no rest	until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

The speaker has appointed watchmen whose job is to remind Yahweh of His expressed intention to establish Jerusalem as a praise in the Earth. Who are the watchmen? Motyer views the watchmen as prophets given a calling to pray for the fulfillment of God's promises, similar to Simeon and Anna in Luke 2 who had prayed for the coming Messiah and rejoiced to see Jesus presented in the Temple. Oswalt understands the passage as a heavenly court scene. The King emphasizes the seriousness of His intention by appointing members of His court to take no rest in reminding Him of his stated purpose to establish a glorious people. These angels in the heavenly court are instructed to never keep silent, all day and all night. The purpose of the watchmen is not to make sure Yahweh remembers His promise. Their purpose is to show how committed Yahweh is to His people, even though there may be a long delay before the realization of His stated purposes. He has not forgotten His plan to establish a new Zion free from death and sin and mourning. And to emphasize that He has not forgotten, He has appointed watchmen to speak of it all day and all night, every day and every night, until it comes about.

Recognizing the watchmen as angels in the heavenly court scene does not exclude human beings from participating in this prayer. If this is the commanded prayer of Heaven, then believers on Earth model the will of God in Heaven by praying for this coming Kingdom on Earth. The prayer Jesus taught us to pray voices this concern, "Our father who is in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Bring about this reality you have promised, God! We are also the watchers, watching for the royal bridegroom to come again for His bride and to establish her in the land of His own making. We pray for her glory to shine as a testimony to the nations.

This is the end of the Third Song of the Conqueror. And as with the first two Songs of the Conqueror, this third Song is followed by a description of glorious Zion. This description confirms the work already promised in the Song so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it. This is the reality that His work will bring about, Isaiah 62:8-12.

The Lord stated in chapter 59 His intention to save because there was no man competent to do so. But that song ended with some kind of tension in 59:21, with the description of an anointed man who would establish covenant. We have reason to think back to the divine-human Messiah in the Book of the King and the divine-human Servant in the Book of the Servant.

Thankfully, Jesus Himself clarifies the right interpretation of these texts. The mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation are at work here. God is three in one, and God came to Earth. God alone saves. No man can save. God becomes man. And He saves as the Son.

The watchmen see the coming of the Son, not as a Suffering Servant, but as an Anointed Conqueror. It is not right at all to view God the Father as the wrathful judge and God the Son as the compassionate savior, as though their virtues, their character is, somehow, divided. Father and Son share righteous virtue equally. The Son saves in compassion and conquers in anger. Revelation 6:15-17 gives us this image with the jarring idea of the Lamb's wrath.

¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

The watchmen are standing on the ramparts and they see a figure coming from Edom and from Bozrah, the capital of Edom. Edom borders Israel as a perennial enemy to the people of God. To ensure peace and goodness, the enemies of peace and goodness must one day be decisively removed. And it's not just going to be Edom that the Lamb comes to conquer.

Edom provides a concrete representation, or example, of the city of man that will one day fall under the wrath of God – all human society. Edom works well as an example because Edom posed a constant threat to the establishment of God's kingdom Israel. Edom also works well with the poetic image of grapes stomped in wrath. In Hebrew, "Edom" means, "red," and, "Bozrah" means, "vintage."

The Divine Warrior, who we have identified as the divine human conqueror Jesus, comes in majestic apparel. In the Third Song He was dressed for a wedding feast apparel fitting for celebration with the redeemed. In this song He comes dressed for war. And He comes alone.

¹ Who is this who comes from Edom,
This One who is majestic in His apparel,
"It is I who speak in righteousness,
With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,
Marching in the greatness of His strength?
mighty to save."

The salvation Jesus provides includes the removal of all that is evil. The watchmen ask a question,

² Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like the one who treads
in the wine press?

The Anointed Conqueror responds.

³ "I have trodden the wine trough alone,
I also trod them in My anger
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.
And trampled them in My wrath;
And I stained all My raiment.
⁴ "For the day of vengeance was in My heart,
And My year of redemption has come.

In 61:2 the favorable year and the day of vengeance were two connected realities. Here, the same realities are connected as the day of vengeance and the year of redemption. God will remove sin, either in redemption or in wrath. The Conqueror continues to speak.

⁵ "I looked, and there was no one to help,
So My own arm brought salvation to Me,
And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold;
And My wrath upheld Me.
⁶ "I trod down the peoples in My anger
And made them drunk in My wrath,
And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

This is the sobering reality of justice, of holiness, of goodness. The ideal community cannot be established without the removal of rebellion, wickedness, sin. And we have seen historical instances of this through the Biblical story. The Flood. Sodom and Gomorrah. The conquest of Canaan. The deaths of Ananias and Saphira. Ultimately, hell. Hell is the place, or the state of utter separation from God and all that is good. Jesus will eradicate evil from His New Heaven and New Earth: human evil and demonic evil. Individual evil and systemic evil. Jesus did not come to judge when He came as a baby, not because He does not judge. He did not come to judge because the world already stood condemned. There was no need to come to the world to judge it. He came to take that condemnation on Himself, that we who are forsaken would no longer be called, "forsaken." He came to seek us out. He came to give us new names. "My delight is in her." "Married." "The Holy people." "Redeemed of the Lord." He did not come to judge them. He came to provide a way of salvation.

But now, having provided us with a way into the holy city of Zion, having come to provide the means of salvation, the means of becoming holy. He will come again to carry out the sentence of His judgment; the sentence that has stood all along, "the wages of sin is death." The favorable year of the Lord cannot be separated from the day of vengeance.

We are enjoined to pray as watchmen. Pray for His Kingdom to come. Pray for that day when his will is done on Earth as in Heaven; when His will is done with joyful, loving, complete obedience. We are given a future vision. This future vision is not meant to take away our motivation to pursue righteousness on Earth. We pray that His will be done on Earth now. The Kingdom is already here in the hearts and minds of all who bow their knee to Jesus. Yearning for a day when all sin, and evil, and injustice, and prejudice is eliminated, we pursue the elimination of those evils in our societies now. We seek justice on Earth now. God's will on Earth now. At the same time, we know that sin is an ever-present reality in human hearts and human society. We understand that justice will continue to be flawed and imperfect until that day when God comes in wrath to purify the world of all sin. The perfect world of a transformed and sinless people cannot come to be without the removal of all who stand in rebellion against that transformation. Jesus will cast out everyone who refuses to be forgiven, who refuses restoration with their good and holy Creator.

That is not our job. We have been told that human society is a mix of wheat and tares, and we can't always tell, you know, who is of the Kingdom and who is not. Our job is not to eliminate the tares. That would do damage to the wheat. Our job is to obey the will of our Father, to love Him, and to love people, and to invite everybody to the wedding feast of the Lamb while there is time. Yield your rebellion and come to the Lamb. The Lamb came in compassion and laid down His life. The Lamb will come again in wrath. I'll close with Revelation 19:11-16.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."