

Peace be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

In our last program, we studied the story of the prophet **Jonah** who tried to run away from the Lord. However, trying to run from the presence of God is like trying to run away from your shadow. God accompanied Jonah, even inside the great fish!

Today we plan to read about a prophet who came after the time of Jonah and whose name is well known in the Holy Scriptures. This is **the prophet Isaiah** who lived seven hundred years before the Messiah was born. Isaiah was a priest who worked for God in the temple which Solomon had built in Jerusalem. Every day, Isaiah and the rest of the priests had to present to God animal sacrifices on the altar. These sacrifices were symbolic of the Messiah who was to shed His blood for the sin of the world.

Listen to what happened to Isaiah one day when he was offering sacrifices in the Temple of the Lord. In the book of Isaiah, chapter six, Isaiah writes:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Then one of the

seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here I am. Send me!"

Thus the Lord God revealed His glory and His holiness to Isaiah and called him to announce His Word to the Israelites, that is, the Jews, and to write it in a book for the benefit of generations to come. The book of Isaiah is lengthy and profound and we do not have time to look into all it contains. However, we can summarize the prophet Isaiah's message with two important thoughts.

First, Isaiah told the Jews **the bad news** about their sin and the punishment that they deserved.

Second, Isaiah presented to them **the Good News** concerning the Messiah who was to come into the world to bear the punishment of their sin.

Therefore, in brief, the message of the prophet Isaiah is:

- 1.) **the bad news about sin and its penalty;** and
- 2.) **the Good News about a Savior who would pay the penalty of sin for sinners.**

Let us first cite a few verses which show **the bad news** that God communicated to Isaiah, so that he might announce it both to the Jews and to anyone who has ears to hear. In chapter one, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children

*given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. **Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations-I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen!***

That was how the prophet Isaiah rebuked the Jews because of their hypocrisy. He summarized their sin with these words: *"The Lord says: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men!'"*

After Isaiah rebuked the Jews for their stubbornness and sinfulness, he began to tell them **the Good News**, which has the power to purify the hearts of all who believe it. In the remaining time, let us listen to some of the wonderful words that Isaiah wrote about the Messiah who would come into the world to save sinners. He writes:

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool!"

*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. A voice of one calling: "In the desert **prepare the way for the Lord**; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say*

to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power!

"The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel-which means 'God with us!'"

God was revealing a **great mystery** through the prophet Isaiah! God planned to send **His Spirit** into the womb of a virgin-a woman who had never been intimate with a man! This is how the Messiah would be born into the world. As you know, the Messiah had no earthly father. Before He was born, He was in heaven, because He is **the Word** Who was with God in the beginning. According to Isaiah's prophecy, the Messiah would be **God in a human body**. What an awesome truth! God, who is Spirit, planned to place His own Spirit and Word into the womb of a virgin and then to be born into the world as a baby! That is what Isaiah prophesied, saying: *"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel-which means, 'God with us!'"*

In the chapters which follow, Isaiah writes much about the coming of the Messiah. In one place he says:

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace!" "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy!"

In these verses, Isaiah prophesies that the Messiah would bring the holiness and mercy of God to the earth. He also foretold how the Messiah would do mighty works that no one had ever done, so that everyone could know that He was the holy Messiah who came from the presence of God! That is why the prophet Isaiah wrote that the Messiah

would be called: *"Wonderful Counselor! Mighty God! Everlasting Father! Prince of Peace!"* Obviously, Isaiah was not like people today who attempt to put the Messiah on the same level as the prophets. The prophet Isaiah recognized the glory of the Redeemer, who would come forth from the presence of God.

Before we say goodbye, we must read one more chapter: **chapter fifty-three**. This chapter is **the most wonderful chapter among all that the prophet Isaiah wrote**, because in it he prophesies how the Messiah would shed His blood like a sacrificed sheep, to bear the punishment of the sin of the world. Listen carefully to the Good News God gave His prophet Isaiah, seven hundred years before the time of the Messiah.

The Holy Scripture says:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He (that is, the Messiah) grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can

speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

That is what Isaiah wrote concerning the suffering, which the Messiah would endure to pay for our sins. Yes, the Redeemer had to suffer and shed His blood for all sinners so that God could forgive our sin without compromising His righteousness. That is why Isaiah wrote: *"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities...We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."* This awesome verse summarizes the message of the book of Isaiah: the **bad news** and the **Good News**.

First, **the bad news** is that we are all sinners and we have no way of saving ourselves!

That is why Isaiah wrote: *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way!"*

Second, **the Good News** is that God designed a plan to save sinners, and that plan is through the death and resurrection of the Messiah. That is why Isaiah wrote: *"But he*

was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities...and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Do you **recognize** how great your sin is before God, the Holy One? Do you **believe** that the Messiah who was born of a virgin was *"God with us"*? Do you **know why** the Messiah had to shed His blood like a sacrificed sheep?

Meditate upon these life-giving words of the prophet Isaiah. God wants to help you to understand all that Isaiah wrote in chapter fifty-three. If anything is unclear to you in what we studied today, please write to us. You may email us at, resources@rockintl.org.

Thank you for listening. God bless you as you think deeply about this message from the Lord to you through the prophet Isaiah:

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool!"