

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Isaiah 59:15-21

New International Version

Sunday, August 2, 2015

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (also known as the *International Sunday School Lessons* [ISSL] and the *Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 2, 2015**, is from **Isaiah 59:15-21**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help teachers with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study or give as a handout to students in the bulletin-sized edition. A podcast for this commentary is also available at the **[International Bible Lesson Forum](#)**.

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Isaiah 59:15-21

(Isaiah 59:15) Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.

Eventually, Truth and the Word of God were not taught, believed, or followed by the descendants of those God led into the Promised Land. God's law and basic honesty were disregarded by everyone except those who would not practice evil. Those who repented and returned to honest and truthful living according to God's law and the written Word of God, the Scriptures, became innocent victims who were cheated, destroyed, or taken unjust advantage of by wicked leaders who controlled the political and religious establishment in the Promised Land. When honest and truthful people sought justice to make things right and restore what had been stolen from them, they received unjust rulings from those who were dishonest and controlled the legal system. God inspired His prophets to preach that God was not indifferent to injustice and the needs of His oppressed people, and God would take action in behalf of His true followers. Through Isaiah and other true prophets, God declared evil and unjust behavior were wrong and would not be tolerated. God promised that He would help those who followed Him and He would restore justice to the land. He would also send the Redeemer to save them.

(Isaiah 59:16) He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him.

God was disgusted and revolted that not one person in the Promised Land would intervene in behalf of the oppressed who sought to do God's will and obey God's law. God looked among His people and He expected to find responsible political and religious leaders who would work together to uphold truth, justice, and God's way of right based on His laws, but He could not find anyone. God expected them to rule in righteousness and defend those who tried to follow God and God's law in all that they did. However, not one of those who officially led God's people would intercede for them before the ungodly establishment that oppressed them; therefore, God sent Isaiah to call them to repent and act responsibly. Because these leaders refused to do right, God would personally intervene to save those who sought to obey Him, and God acted based on His righteous character as revealed in the law of God and God's acts in history. Even though God was appalled at the injustice He saw, His righteousness upheld or sustained Him—everything He had said and done was right, and He knew He had not done anything wrong or had omitted any action that needed to be done. God was not the cause of the evil others did, nor was God responsible for the refusal of those who knew His law when they would not rule justly and help the oppressed who obeyed Him.

(Isaiah 59:17) He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.

Isaiah named part of "the whole armor of God" (see Ephesians 6:10-17). No evil act or thought can penetrate the heart of God and mislead Him because of His breastplate of righteousness. God's righteousness can be clearly seen as a breastplate of protection, and Paul wrote that God's people should put on that breastplate, which can protect them spiritually from the evil actions of others. God's actions and thoughts in coming to the Promised Land focused on saving His people, in saving those who obeyed Him and acted in truth and righteousness, but He would need to fight evil to help them. No evil one or group could deter God from accomplishing the salvation of those who repented and returned to Him, and He would defeat evil and all unjust oppressors with armor they could not harm or understand.

(Isaiah 59:18) According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due.

God will act and destroy evil by doing what is just and right. God will respond to those who practice evil, and He will do what is necessary to stop them; yet, God will not do anything unjust or unrighteous when He stops people from doing evil. God's foes or enemies have also been the enemies of His people; God's enemies have sought to

destroy God's people in a variety of ways as Amos and Micah described in their books of prophecy. God will do what His enemies justly deserve, because they have refused to repent, return to God, and practice what is right in all of their relationships with God and others.

(Isaiah 59:19) From the west, people will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along.

When the LORD comes to bring justice and righteousness to His people, those who practice injustice will see God dressed in His whole armor, which will bring fear to their hearts. They will see their unjust deeds and immoral ways of living reflected in His shining breastplate of righteousness. They will see from His helmet that they cannot prevent Him from saving those they have abused and afflicted. Therefore, they will fear His name and bow down before His blazing brightness. God will come upon them as an irresistible flood and bring an end to their evil deeds.

(Isaiah 59:20) “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.

Isaiah foretold that God will come as the Redeemer to free those who have turned from evil to the LORD and His Truth. The Redeemer will free them from the evil ones who have despoiled them and taken unjust advantage of them. Those who have been persecuted for obeying God's law will see their Redeemer and all the answers to their prayers reflected in His breastplate of righteousness and the actions He takes. Though much of Isaiah's message included symbolism, he preached that God will save those who repent of their sins, and God will punish those who persist in disobedience and injustice.

(Isaiah 59:21) “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants--from this time on and forever,” says the LORD.

Jeremiah preached about the new covenant, and Isaiah revealed more about the new covenant that the Messiah would bring: “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah’” (Jeremiah 31:31; see also Hebrews 8:8 and Hebrews 9:15). When Jesus came the first time, He established the new covenant. Luke wrote, “In the same way, after the supper he [Jesus] took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). Jesus defeated all of the spiritual enemies of all those who repented and trusted in Him as the Truth (see John 14:6). Those who truly repented and believed in Him, He filled with the Holy Spirit of God; furthermore, Jesus

promised that He would never leave or forsake His followers. The words of truth that Jesus taught, and the words that the Holy Spirit inspired His apostles to remember, preach, teach, and write in the Bible have not departed from those who have believed in and obey Jesus. These words of truth have been passed down from parents to children for generations and they will remain true forever. When Jesus comes again, He will defeat all of the enemies of God, just as the prophets foretold (Luke 20:40-44).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What did God see when He looked upon the people living in Judah and Jerusalem?
2. What sustained or upheld God when He considered the situation in the Promised Land?
3. What two pieces of armor did God put on in order to help His true followers?
4. What did God say He would do to those who practiced evil?
5. Who did God say He would send, to whom would He send Him, what would He do, and what would be the results of His coming?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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