

Unit II: God Promises a Just Kingdom

What Goes Around Comes Around

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 42:1-9
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 61:8–62:12
PRINT PASSAGE: Isaiah 61:8-11; 62:2-4a

Key Verse—For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. (Isaiah 61:8, KJV)

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“For I, the LORD, love justic; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them.” (Isaiah 61:8, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Explicate the hope of vindication for the righteous and faithful.
- Long for salvation and restoration for God’s people.
- Commit to making just decisions in everyday life.

*Key Terms

Diadem (62:3)—Hebrew: *tsaniph* (tsaw-neef): a turban, hood, headdress.

Faithfulness (61:8)—Hebrew: *emeth* (eh-meth): “truth” (KJV); firmness.

Rejoice(s) (61:10)—Hebrew: *sus* or *sis* (soos): exult(s); rejoice(s) greatly; delight(s).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

“What goes around comes around” is a proverb and title of a song by Justin Timberlake (other artists have produced songs by the same name); some date the phrase’s origin back to the 1970s in the United States. According to *Dictionary.com*, the phrase means “retribution follows wrongdoing; justice may take time, but it will prevail.” However, the earliest instance of the use of the phrase was traced to its appearance in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African-American newspaper in 1952.



The Biblical Context

Isaiah prophesied in Judah over a period of forty years (ca 740–700 BC). He ministered during the reigns of the Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Tradition holds that he was killed during the reign of Manasseh by being sawed in half with a wooden saw. The major audience for Isaiah's prophetic messages was the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He condemned their ritualistic worship and idolatry. Isaiah predicted Judah's Babylonian captivity and their subsequent deliverance under the Persian king Cyrus. Thematically, the focus of his prophecy is twofold: judgment (1:1–35:10) and salvation (40:1–66:24). The context of this lesson is within his prophecies about the future glory of the nation of Israel when they will be restored in fulfillment of God's original purpose for them.

In that context, the phrase carried a positive rather than a negative connotation. The primary meaning of this phrase predates these appearances and usages. The phrase captures the essence of the principle that “you will reap what you sow,” a foundational teaching in the Word of God. In His Word, “what goes around comes around” or “you reap what you sow” is specifically applied to those who devise plans to oppress, exploit, and destroy His people. God loves justice and hates injustice in any form and promises to give due recompense to those who intentionally promote it. Prophesying to a rebellious people headed toward exile, Isaiah foretold the time when God would completely reverse their situation, vindicate them, and punish their oppressors.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Promised Justice (*Isaiah 61:8-9*)

KJV

8 For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in *truth*, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

NIV

8 “For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my *faithfulness* I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 “Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.”

Despite the disobedience of the nation of Israel, God remained true to His everlasting covenant to bless and restore them to righteous living. Isaiah's message to Israel was a call to accept God's judgment, to repent of the sins that had led to their fall, and to

anticipate His new day of salvation. The last twenty-seven chapters of his book are devoted to God's unmerited favor toward Israel. Central to this message is the Suffering Servant, Christ the Lamb of God, who would initiate Israel's redemption and future glory. His advent and glory are the focus of chapter 41. He will be Israel's ultimate Redeemer who rescues them (see verses 1-2a). Their circumstances will be reversed by the Anointed Redeemer (see verses 3-7). These blessings will be the result of God's decision to restore the justice He loved while removing the injustice and robbery He hated (**verse 8a**). Robbery, here, refers to holding back or not presenting the best in their burnt offerings. Although their current suffering was justified, God promised to make an everlasting or new covenant with them that promised His justice (**verse 8b**). The result of this new covenant would identify them as a blessed and unique people (**verse 9**). This everlasting covenant is described by Jeremiah (see 31:31-37) and includes the new covenant Jesus instituted by His death. This new covenant ensures that believers who are now included in it by salvation can look forward to His coming kingdom of justice and the vindication of the righteous. In anticipation of the fulfillment of this promise, God's people are responsible for maintaining an obedient relationship with Him and actively resisting injustice by promoting and supporting just causes.

 **What Do You Think?** *Salvation identifies believers as blessed and unique. How can we visibly demonstrate this in a world characterized by injustice?*

Praise for Justice (Isaiah 61:10-11)

KJV

10 I will greatly *rejoice* in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

NIV

10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul *rejoices* in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

11 For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

Growing up during what is now coined the “traditional era” of worship, I often heard my pastor say that the messenger must first “feel it.” The result of this personal internalization was an outward expression of personal praise. This was the kind of experience Isaiah had in response to this message on behalf of the remnant of Israel to whom it was addressed. His response was a hymn of praise for the blessings God promised (**verse 10**). The prophet rejoiced for the redeemed remnant because God has clothed them in salvation and righteousness. They are recognized as His people who are living by His standards. The beauty of these garments of salvation is compared to the ornate turban worn by a bridegroom and the costly jewelry worn by a bride as expressions of the joy and blessings of their wedding. God also promised that He would cause Israel’s righteousness to spring up like a fruitful garden in other nations (**verse 11**). This hymn of praise pictures the imputed righteousness that the repentant sinner receives by coming to Christ for salvation. It also reminds us of the purpose of the gift—to offer true worship, live by God’s standards, and be His appointed messengers to give hope to the lost and those oppressed by injustice.

🔍 What Do You Think? What evidence is there that would suggest that the purposes for our being clothed in righteousness are not being fully demonstrated?

Promised Transformation (*Isaiah 62:2-4a*)

KJV

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal *diadem* in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate:

NIV

2 The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.

3 You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD’s hand, a royal *diadem* in the hand of your God.

4 No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate.

Israel had complained that God had not fulfilled His promises to them. God responded to their complaint by expressing His will to reestablish her righteousness and salvation, not for them only, but for and in full view of all nations and their leaders (**verse 2a**). This

new status will be accompanied by a new name reflecting it (**verse 2b**). The transformed people of God are metaphorically pictured as a crown on His head and a diadem resting in His hand (**verse 3**). The fullness of this restored relationship with the Lord is reflected by the nation's and the land's new names. The nation would no longer be called "Forsaken" nor the land "Desolate" (**verse 4a**). Instead, the nation will be known as Hephzibah—"my delight is in her"—and the land, Beulah or "married" (see verse 4b). The returning exiles will be married to the land in a permanent and fruitful relationship like that of a blessed marriage. Israel is assured that God will win the victory over their enemies and recompense their unjust dealings with them. The transformative status for Israel looks forward to the establishment of God's just kingdom in the Millennium. Those who have experienced the transforming power of the new birth in Christ have been given a new name, a new status, and a new hope for the future. Because of this new covenant relationship with God, we can be confident that He will right every injustice and recompense the unjust.

🔍 What Do You Think? How should our knowing that God wants to display us to the world affect how we live our daily lives?

A Closing Thought


God's chosen people, Israel, are promised a future where justice will prevail after He has defeated and repaid their unjust oppressors for the evil they suffered at their hands. His faithfulness to His covenant with them is the assurance that all who devise unjust ways, to take advantage of or physically harm others, will one day experience the law of reciprocity—they will reap what they have sown. Because the church, the body of Christ, also belongs to God, she has the same promise of experiencing an eternal kingdom where justice is the norm rather than the exception. God will vindicate the righteous and punish the unrighteous for their actions.

Your Life

God loves justice and those who strive to promote it as a result of their relationship with Him. The time when justice will be an eternal reality is future, but each of us can actively resist and challenge injustice by meeting the needs of its victims and by engaging in actions that support just causes.

Your World!

It is obvious that we live in a world characterized by blatant and intentional acts of injustice. We have God's infallible word that those who promote it will one day reap what they have sown in kind. Our challenge is to demonstrate justice in our daily decisions and actions as we wait for God to move.

 **Closing Prayer** Father, thank You for assuring us that You will one day bring to fruition Your kingdom where justice will eternally prevail. Help us to support and encourage those we know who are experiencing forms of injustice, and encourage them to trust Your promises. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson introduces Unit III, "Called to God's Work of Justice." The lesson's text is Zephaniah 3:14-20. We will study Zephaniah's proclamation of a return to righteousness, justice, and peace.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY , April 27	"God Promises Restoration of Israel's Fortunes"	(Deuteronomy 30:1-6)
TUESDAY , April 28	"God Will Shepherd the People"	(Ezekiel 34:11-16)
WEDNESDAY , April 29	"God Will Strengthen the People"	(Zechariah 10:6-12)
THURSDAY , April 30	"Christ's Forgiveness of Israel's Sins"	(Acts 5:27-32)
FRIDAY , May 1	"Leaders, Priests, and Prophets Don't Listen"	(Zephaniah 3:1-7)
SATURDAY , May 2	"God Will Preserve a Remnant"	(Zephaniah 3:8-13)
SUNDAY , May 3	"Rejoice in God's Glory and Salvation"	(Zephaniah 3:14-20)

Notes