

“Your God Reigns!”

Thomas Robinson, *God of Life & Light for the World*, 4. October 21, 2018

Isaiah 52:1-12

¹ Awake, awake, [Eph 5:14]

put on your strength, Zion;
put on a garment of your beauty,
Jerusalem, the holy city;

for there shall no more come into you
the uncircumcised and the unclean.

² Shake yourself from the dust and arise;

Captive Jerusalem;
loose the bonds from your neck,
Captive daughter Zion.

³ For thus says Yahweh: “You were sold for nothing,
and you shall be redeemed without money.” [1Pt 1:18]

⁴ For thus says my Lord Yahweh: “My people went
down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there; then the
Assyrian oppressed them for nothing.

⁵ Now therefore what have I here,” declares Yahweh,
“seeing that my people are taken away for nothing?
Their rulers wail,” declares Yahweh, “and continually all
the day my name is blasphemed [Rm 2:24].

⁶ Therefore my people shall know my name. In that day
they will know that I am the one who says, “here I am.”

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of one announcing good news. [Rm 10:15]

who publishes Peace (*shalom*), [Eph 2:17; 6:15; Lk 2:14]
who brings news of Good (*tov*),
who publishes Salvation (*yeshuah*), [Rm 1:16-17]
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns as King!” [Mk 1:15]

⁸ The voice of your watchmen – they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;

for before their very eyes they see
the return of Yahweh to Zion. [Lk 1:68; 7:16; 19:44]

⁹ Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for Yahweh has comforted his people;

he has redeemed Jerusalem. [Lk 2:25,38]

¹⁰ Yahweh has bared his holy arm [Ex 6:6; Is 53:1]
before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see [Act 1:8]
the salvation of our God.

¹¹ Depart, depart, go out from there;
touch no unclean thing; [1 Cor 6:17]
go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves,
you who bear the vessels of Yahweh.

¹² For you shall not go out in haste,
and you shall not go in flight, [Ex 12:11]
for Yahweh will go before you,
and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Mark 1:14-15

¹⁴ Now after John was handed over, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming God's Good News, ¹⁵ and saying,
“The time is fulfilled, and God's kingdom is right here! Change your way of thinking and trust in this Good News.”

Isaiah 40:9-11

⁹ Go on up to a high mountain, | herald of good news to Zion; | lift up your voice with strength, | herald of good news to
Jerusalem. | Lift it up, don't be afraid. | Say to the cities of Judah, | “Look, Here is your God!” ¹⁰ Look, my Lord
Yahweh comes with might, | and his arm rules for him; | behold, his reward is with him, | and his recompense before
him. | ¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd; | he will gather the lambs in his arms; | he will carry them in his bosom.

Isaiah 51:9-13

⁹ Awake, awake, put on strength, Arm of Yahweh! ... Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?
¹⁰ Was it not you who dried up the sea, ... who made ... a way for the redeemed to pass over? ¹¹ And the ransomed of
Yahweh shall return ... to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy will be upon their heads...and sorrow shall flee away.
¹² “I, I am the one who comforts you! Why are you afraid of a man who dies, ... who is like grass, ¹³ and have forgotten
Yahweh, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?”

Romans 10:10-17

¹⁰ For with the heart a person believes in Jesus and is set right with God, and with the mouth a person confesses
Jesus' Lordship and is saved. ¹¹ For Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” [Isa 28:16]
¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same one is Lord of all people, bestowing his riches on all

who call on him. ¹³ For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” [Joel 2:32] ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone proclaiming? ⁵ And how are they to proclaim unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those announcing good news of good things!” [Isa 52:7] ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed that good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed the message heard from us?” [Isa 53:1] ¹⁷ So believing is from a message heard, and the message is through a word about the Messiah.

The Kingdom of God and a Captive People

When Isaiah of the Exile writes in about 545 b.c. nothing has yet really happened to change Israel’s situation. Yes, Cyrus the Persian is advancing, but Babylon’s empire still reigns. Even when Isaiah’s prophecies are fulfilled and Persia allows some of the exiles to return to Jerusalem, it’s not as an independent kingdom but only as a small sub-province within the Persian empire. God pushed Israel to deal with the paradox of human power. As a kingdom, Israel had failed. Even David was not great on policies, but on knowing God as God. Corruption, injustice, idolatry became so ingrained that God abandoned Jerusalem. Now God awakens Jerusalem to beauty and captivity. Isaiah announces a new Exodus: Knowing God. God reigns as king. God intervenes. God is king over all nations! Yes, but Israel wanted that to mean Israel is a powerful, independent empire of its own. How can God be king if He and his people don’t rule over surrounding powers. Isaiah’s words created a continuing longing & expectation: What is God’s Kingdom? When? How? By the time of Jesus, Isaiah’s words and vision had been percolating in Israel for nearly 600 yrs. through Persians, Greeks, Ptolemies, Seleucids, Hasmoneans, Romans, Herod, Antipas/Pilate.

Jesus Announces the Kingdom of God

When Jesus announces the “Kingdom of God,” he touches that electric nerve. People were ready for an anointed King backed by God to do what they imagined Isaiah and other prophets meant. Jesus showed great power, but he didn’t use it properly – against Rome (not directly). Modern scholars from Reimarus to Reza Aslan have portrayed Jesus as a failed Zealot. Failed kingdom. It’s hard to imagine real power that’s not our kind of power. Has God’s kingdom come? Look around. But it is Isaiah’s visions of God returning to Zion and the Servant of the Lord that provide the vision of meaning, the language that Jesus speaks when he announces and unfolds God’s Kingdom. It is power beyond imagining, over all nations, all creation. It is God himself intervening by his mighty arm. But it’s seen in leading a few captive exiles home, in God’s servant turning God’s people back to God. It’s in a despised, unrecognized figure anointed by God’s Spirit not oil of coronation. It’s an announcement of Good News, rejected as weak and foolish, but God’s power & wisdom. Jesus comes, announcing God’s kingdom, not to win over followers but to urge people to listen, to look, to see the arrival. Only when it’s accomplished in Jesus’ death & resurrection can they begin to comprehend. Jesus and Eleven: *“All authority in heaven and on earth...”*

An Exodus for All the Ends of the Earth

When early believers told the story, they too went back to Isaiah and other prophets to grasp reality. Both the purity and glory of God’s people and the inclusion of all nations had to come together. One God of all nations. A new temple. New circumcision. New “cleanness.” The ancient promise to Abraham is fulfilled. *“The ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”* God’s kingdom is on a scale of power beyond, Israel, Persia, Rome, China. God comes for the life of all of his creatures. He conquers death, unmasks our power by violence, injustice, domination. Depart! Leave it behind – a new Exodus. God leads all broken people in a new song of deliverance.