

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text
Isaiah 52:1-12

Topic
Isaiah directs our attention to the beautiful feet of him who brings
Good News.

Title
"Jesus Wants To Keep You Barefoot & Preaching"

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

January 2, 1956, was the day that 29-year-old Jim Elliot had planned and prayed for. He and four other missionaries would be setting up camp in the territory of a dangerous and uncivilized Ecuadorian Indian tribe known then as the Aucas.

The Aucas killed strangers.

Nevertheless Jim Elliot had no doubt God wanted him to tell the Aucas about Jesus.

With Jim Elliot were Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, and pilot Nate Saint. They were flown in and dropped off on an Auca beach. Nate Saint then flew over the Auca village and called on loud speaker to come to the beach. After four days, an Auca man and two women appeared. They shared a meal with them and urged them to return with others.

January 8, 1956. Two Auca women walked out of the jungle. Elliot and Fleming waded toward them. As they got closer they heard a terrifying cry behind them. They turned and saw a group of Auca warriors, spears raised, poised to throw.

Elliot had a firearm, but the missionaries had vowed they would not kill an Auca who did not know Jesus to save himself from being killed. Within seconds, the missionaries were dead.

I came across a detail that was new to me. Two others had initially signed-on to accompany Elliot to Ecuador. They bailed on him. Wedding plans got in the way. Did they dodge a spear? Or miss the honor of being martyred? That is for them to take before the Lord.

What we can glean is that it is possible for a believer to prioritize living in the material world over spiritual things.

In the eighth century BC, the prophet Isaiah saw 150yrs into the future of God's chosen nation. He predicted the fall of Jerusalem to the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar. He saw the Jews led away as captives to Babylon. Isaiah also saw they would be freed by Cyrus of Persia to go home. Most of them, the majority, did not go home.

They prioritized living in the material world over spiritual things.

Since **we** live in a spiritual Babylon, we can ask, "Am I prioritizing living in the material world?"

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Get Up & Put On Your Beautiful Garments**, and **#2 Go Out & Show Off Your Beautiful Feet**.

#1 - Get Up & Put On Your Beautiful Garments (v1-6)

The Bible reveals all human beings are sinners. To illustrate, we are told that our clothing is like filthy rags. Dressed in filthy rags, we cannot be admitted into Heaven. We need a white robe, called the "robe of righteousness." Jesus is the only 'distributor' who has this robe. He gives it when you believe what He did for you on the Cross. You believe God and Jesus exchanges clothes with you:

- The Lord takes away your filthy garments.
- The Lord gives you His robe of righteousness.

It is a one-size-fits-all grace garment given to whosoever in the human race believes God.

Our chapter begins with "beautiful garments."

Isa 52:1 Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean Shall no longer come to you.

It is crucial that we first read these verses, and all of Isaiah, and all the OT, as it pertains to its original audience. It is written to Jews of the southern kingdom of Judah. These verses... This chapter... Invites them to come home from Babylon.

The Lord depicts the city of Jerusalem as a woman who puts-on her Sabbath Day best.

We encounter this kind of illustration a few times in the Bible. The most prominent is at the end of the Revelation. We read, "One of the seven angels [said to the apostle John] "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." **Sacrificing lambs anticipated the coming of a Savior who would be the final sacrifice required to forgive sin** And [the angel] carried [John] away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed [him] the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (21:9-10).

The "bride" is the resurrected & rewarded Church. She is so identified with the city that it's not wrong to call it the "bride."

This trope is used humorously in the MCU when Captain America calls Spider-Man "Queens," a Burroughs in New York.

The "uncircumcised" and the "unclean" refer to unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles, respectively. Are there in 2024 unbelievers in Jerusalem? Yes. That means Isaiah was talking about the far future, the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Isa 52:2 Shake yourself from the dust, arise; Sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!

"Arise; Sit down." They were to "arise" in Babylon and leave, then "sit down" in Jerusalem. There is no doubt all of the Jews ought to have left.

"Bonds of your neck" are those shackles that you see on ancient prisoners. That was how they were led in, but no how they would be let out.

Isa 52:3 For thus says the LORD: "You have sold yourselves for nothing, And you shall be redeemed without money."

Slaves were bought & sold. The Jews were conquered and not sold. They could leave once King Cyrus of Persia gave them their freedom. There was no price to pay.

In the NT, the apostle Paul describes certain people as "having been taken captive by [the devil] to *do* his will" (Second Timothy 2:26). There are Bible commentators who say he is talking about believers, not unbelievers. I use it a lot to describe the irrational behavior of unbelievers. For example, some of the things going on in our country are not political issues. They are matters of common sense that every rational person ought to agree with. They are so irrational, so illogical, it leaves you scratching your head. Every time I see a biological man compete in a sporting event against biological women, that's insane. It isn't even debatable. Some principality or power thought it up and folks taken captive by Satan impose it.

Isa 52:4 For thus says the Lord GOD: ' "My people went down at first Into Egypt to dwell there; Then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

This is a 24 word summary of two thousand years of Jewish history, from the Exodus to the Assyrian invasion and ruin of the northern kingdom. It highlights the historic persecution and antisemitism against God's beloved nation.

Isa 52:5 Now therefore, what have I here," says the LORD, "That My people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them Make them wail," says the LORD, "And My name *is* blasphemed continually every day.

Isa 52:6 Therefore My people shall know My name; Therefore *they shall know* in that day That I *am* He who speaks: 'Behold, *it is* I.' "

When you read the Bible, it seems as though the Jews are in a constant state of rebellion and failure. God is over and over again forced to discipline them. The other nations of the world look upon this. They take advantage of the Jews, and they blaspheme the Lord. All that is going to end.

The last book of the Bible, in its closing chapters, describes a farther future. Babylon will be a city again. God will destroy her again and save His people.

James Bond walks out of the ocean. He removes his SCUBA gear and is perfectly clothed in a tuxedo, complete with lapel flower.

Believers in Jesus have additional wardrobe they put on over their robe. One is the armor of God. We are told to put it on because we are in a war against malevolent creatures.

In World War II, Allied forces invaded Normandy, France, to establish a beachhead.

We must not allow Satan to have the beachhead.

There are three lifestyles believers adopt on their journey:

1. You can think of your time on Earth with Jesus as if you are living on a luxury liner with the Church. You never get close to the beach because your life is about comfort.
2. You can disembark and get into a landing craft. You'll take heavy fire. The Higgins Boat amphibious landing craft was typically constructed from plywood. It could ferry a roughly platoon-sized complement of 36 men to shore at 9 knots. Can you say "sitting duck?"
3. You can storm the beach. Wearied, wounded, wondering... We press on that [we] may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of [us]" (Philippians 3:12).

#2 - Go Out & Show Off Your Beautiful Feet (v7-12)

"In 2015 an exhibition of ancient clay tablets discovered in modern-day Iraq shed light on the daily life of Jews exiled to Babylon. The exhibition featured more than 100 cuneiform tablets, each no bigger than your palm, that detail transactions and contracts between Judeans driven from Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar around 600BC."

The Jews traded, ran businesses, and helped the administration of Babylon. One archaeologist said, "They were free to go about their lives, they weren't slaves. Nebuchadnezzar wasn't a brutal ruler in that respect. He knew he needed the Judeans to help revive the struggling Babylonian economy."

Let's say in Babylon you are a successful businessman with a comfortable life. Your kids are happy - your son plays football for the Babylon Bees, your daughter spends

summers interning at the hanging gardens. All of a sudden you could go "home." But... *You **are** home.* Only a handful of Jews who had seen the Temple would survive.

You'd be going 'home' to ruins, to a city with no walls and no Temple. There were no incentives. Materially speaking, it was foolish. You'd have to be stupid... **or spiritual.** You might face a huge, life-changing spiritual decision. You will face many less drastic but just as important spiritual decisions. When you do, it is more than OK to be a faithful fool for Jesus. Choose the option that represents storming the beaches.

The last three verses of this chapter belong with chapter fifty-three. They are the LORD's excited, enthusiastic anticipation of the return of the Jews to Jerusalem once Cyrus tells them they are free to go.

Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good *things*, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

The "watchmen" of verse eight suddenly see heralds running in the mountains spreading Good News as they go. The "Good News" is the return of the Jews.

The apostle Paul borrows this verse to describe believers heralding the Gospel in the Church Age (Romans 10:15). The Gospel message includes the understanding that Jesus has made peace between us and God.

For a run like that, unless you have Hobbit-feet you'd better be wearing Kicks. Why go barefoot?

Some fit Swede I found in my research wrote on his blog, *"In the last twelve months, I have worn nothing but barefoot shoes or no shoes at all. Before that, I spent another twelve months in mostly barefoot shoes when working out, running, or going on walks. I'm not exaggerating when I say it changed my life."*

Research it for yourself. For health & fitness we ought to go barefoot.

I think I'm right in saying that the Jewish priests ministered in the Temple barefoot. We are not told that; we assume it because there is no description of footwear.

My speculation on the Barefoot Messenger Service is that it communicated a return to Temple worship. The barefoot priests had not been able to perform their tasks in the

Temple for more than 70yrs. When they returned to Jerusalem, they built the Temple *before* the walls. Stupid - unless you understand that worship is warfare.

Why am I not preaching barefoot? Even more so, why does the worship team have shoes on? Answer two questions:

1. As a believer, is your body permanently indwelt by God the Holy Spirit?
2. As a believer, is worship an event or is it your lifestyle?

Since you are the Temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and your life *is* worship, shouldn't you go barefoot at all times?

Isa 52:8 Your watchmen shall lift up *their* voices, With their voices they shall sing together; For they shall see eye to eye When the LORD brings back Zion.

Isa 52:9 Break forth into joy, sing together, You waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.

The only commentary here is to note God's joy. You & I can bring joy to God!! We are always quick to point out the truth that God does not need us. But that doesn't cancel out His enjoying us. We are not just another something that God has created out of boredom. We are made in His image. We are meant to be His greatest, and therefore most beloved, creation.

Isa 52:10 The LORD has made bare His holy arm In the eyes of all the nations; And all the ends of the earth shall see The salvation of our God.

Maybe you've seen *The Ghost & the Darkness*. It is the terrifying but true story of two lions in Kenya, Africa, the Tsavo Man-eaters. In one scene a native, Mahina, thinks he has killed it. He looks at Val Kilmer and raises up his bloody arms in a victory pose. Yeah, they eat him later.

Isa 52:11 Depart! Depart! Go out from there, Touch no unclean *thing*; Go out from the midst of her, Be clean, You who bear the vessels of the LORD.

Isa 52:12 For you shall not go out with haste, Nor go by flight; For the LORD will go before you, And the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard.

Get up! Get out! You won't need anything, so don't be like your ancestors in the Exodus from Egypt and take spoil. March properly with the implements from the Temple that were stolen by Nebuchadnezzar. Don't hurry in fear but enjoy the walk. God will guide & protect, and He has your '6'.

I used to think it was probably OK for some or even the majority of the Jews to remain in Babylon. But that's just wrong. God told them to depart and get to Jerusalem.

The figure historians have arrived at is 80%. That is, *80% of the Jews in Babylon remained behind*. You can read all about it in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

Without Jerusalem and the Temple, many prophecies about the coming of Messiah could not have been fulfilled by Jesus some 400yrs later.

We are set-up to examine ourselves, "Am I luxury crusin?" "Am I motoring to join the fight?" "Am I on the beach, sometimes running, sometimes crawling, but advancing?"

Were the missionaries of *Operation Ecuador* fools? *Absolutely!*

We aren't in Ecuador but the mission is the same. We come together as the Church to be built-up in our faith in order to go out and do the work of the ministry. The work is the Great Commission, to go into the whole world with the Good News of salvation in Jesus.

We should be willing to be fools in *Operation Hanford*, or *Lemoore*, or *NASLemoore*, *Corcoran*, *Armona*, *Grangeville*, *Avenal*, *Stratford*, and, yes, *Riverdale*; in *Operation My Home*, *My Workplace*, *My School*.

Elizabeth Elliot wrote, "I have one desire now - to live a life of reckless abandon for the Lord, putting all my energy and strength into it."