

## Dyed Garments From Bozrah

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Our passage of study today, this Communion Sabbath, comes again from the wonderful book of Isaiah. Chapter 63 has been a source of interest and inspiration to me for a long time. It is presented, like much of the Old Testament, in the form of poetry with the prophet making use of many of the tools of verse craftsmanship in the construction of his message, including figures of speech, symbols and plays on words.

“Who is this Who comes from Edom, with *dyed garments from Bozrah*, this One Who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? ‘I Who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.’ Why is Your apparel red, and your garments like one who treads in the winepress? ‘I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me.’” Isaiah 63:1-5.

Most certainly this is talking about the Messiah. Jesus is the subject of this passage. He is the One “glorious in apparel.” The picture comes from one who has trampled grapes in the winepress, extracting the juice from the clusters. At the beginning of America’s Civil war in 1861, Julia Ward Howe used the phrases of this Scripture in her classic “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” penning

“Mine eyes have seen the glory

Of the coming of the Lord

He is trampling out the vintage

Where the grapes of wrath are stored.”

In Bible times and long afterward, juice was obtained from the grapes by “foot,” that is, simply walking on, trampling on the clusters till the delicious juice was separated from the rest of the material. During the process of course, it was likely

that some of the juice would splash up on the clothing of the one doing the trampling and stain the garments. This is the picture Isaiah is presenting to us.

It is for this reason that the names “Edom” and “Bozrah” are included in his poem. “Edom” means “red,” and highlights the red color of the grape juice. Because of his ruddy skin color, Esau was given the nickname “Edom.” “Bozrah” was a featured city of Edom and means “fort,” “enclosure,” or “sheepfold.”

In this picture, there is a two-fold emphasis. There are actually two pictures. There is the theme of salvation; there is also the theme of judgment and destruction. True to God’s merciful character, salvation is given prominence: judgment is presented as the “*day* of vengeance,” while salvation is presented as the “*year* of My redeemed.” This contrast is also given two chapters earlier. The Messiah, the “anointed One,” is commissioned “to proclaim the acceptable *year* of the LORD, and the *day* of vengeance of our God.” Isaiah 61:2. You might think of this merciful contrast as another type of “day/year principle” in the Bible.

The Messiah in His role of Savior is brought to view by the phrases, “I Who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” “My own arm brought salvation for Me.” In this sense, the trampling of the vintage represents Christ’s bloody ordeal from Gethsemane to the cross. He sweat drops of blood in the “place of the press,” Gethsemane; He shed drops of blood undergoing the scourge and the crown of thorns and being pinned to the cross by the spikes in His hands and feet. Truly, in His role as divine Sacrifice for sin, He trod the winepress alone and our blood was “sprinkled upon” His garments. This is a picture of Christ saving us on Calvary. The “dyed garments from Bozrah” represent His magnificent but bloody achievement in securing our redemption.

On the other hand, this picture also presents the ultimate fate of those who reject Christ’s wonderful mercy and suffer His judgment. Though Christ paid for the sins of the entire world, many will refuse His grace and have to pay for their own sins. What a tragedy! Why should anyone’s sins be paid for twice?

This aspect of the Scripture is brought to view in the verses which read, “The day of vengeance is in My heart; I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; made them drunk in My fury and brought down their strength to the earth.” The Scripture brings to our minds the truth that sin is lethal; it is deadly. It brings cessation of life.

Though the devil would have us think that Adam’s transgression was a minor thing, or as some teach, a necessary thing, the Bible reveals to us that sin is lethal.

It results in death. The Bible informs us that final separation from God, the second death, will be experienced either by the sinner or by Christ having experienced the second death in the sinner's place. But if the sinner refuses the Gift of salvation, God's just judgment will be visited on him or her. Revelation draws from this scene and presents the fate of the wicked at Christ's coming with these words, "Another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle (Christ) saying, 'Thrust in Your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.' So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city." Revelation 14:18, 19.

The point is that each of us has a decision to make that will affect our destinies for eternity. It is a serious decision; it is a life or death decision. "Blood" in the Bible represents "life." We will either experience a saving relationship with Jesus, Who shed His blood for us, or we will sadly reap the reward for our sins.

It is our relationship to the cross that makes the difference. The angel who gave the instruction to reap the grapes "came out from the *altar*," which stands for the cross of Calvary. It was there that our Savior presented His body as a Sacrifice for us. When He was born, with prophetic insight Simeon declared, "This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel." Luke 2:34. It is in relation to Jesus, the One Whom God sent to be a Savior, that we either "rise" to glory or "fall" to destruction. His coming and death is the great pivot point of history. It is in relation to this event that we either experience the joy of His salvation or the dismay of His judgment.

Today, as we lift the cup of Communion, containing the juice representing His blood, we confess that we desire His salvation. We confess that we accept His blood shed in our behalf as the means of our being accepted by God. We gratefully choose Isaiah's picture of the One "mighty to save," and declare our intention, by His grace to avoid the picture of judgment and destruction left to the wicked. How wonderful is our God! How merciful are His ways!