

ISAIAH, PART 2 (COMFORT FOR HIS PEOPLE)
PROGRAM 37 (#911152)
WEEK 8 (#911331) (Guest Teacher David Arthur)
©2011 PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



PRECEPTS FOR LIFE
a Production of
Precept Ministries International
P.O. Box 182218, Chattanooga, TN 37422-7218
1-888-734-7707/ www.preceptsforlife.com

The following is an actual transcript of the PRECEPTS FOR LIFE Broadcast. For the purpose of filling transcript requests quickly, they have received only light editing. If you have questions concerning the material covered in this broadcast, Kay has published a number of books explaining the Scripture in depth. These books may be ordered by contacting the telephone number or address printed above.

SERIES: Isaiah, Part 2 (Comfort For His People)
TITLE: Program 37 – A Holy Priesthood
(Guest Teacher David Arthur)

TUESDAY

INTRO

Kay: Do you know what Precepts for Life is all about and Precept Ministries International? It's three D's. It's discover truth for yourself, go deeper and disciple others. Today you're going to hear from David Arthur, Precept Ministries Vice President of Teaching and Training, a disciple of the inductive study method and an advocate of it. You're gonna be so blessed as you listen to his lesson. Thank you for going deeper with us.

OPEN

David: As a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, one who has come from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, what is our role? How has God designed us to be used by Him for His purposes and for His glory? What are we to do? How are we to live our lives? Is there specific things we should be engaged in? Is there certain things that we should be about as

Christians? Today we're gonna answer that question using the Scriptures.
What is God's design for you and for me?

PART ONE

David: Hi! My name is David Arthur, and I'm so glad you've to study the book of Isaiah with us in "Precepts for Life". Today we're gonna continue our study on Isaiah 61 and see what happens when He who is anointed by the Spirit comes proclaiming good news to the poor. Let's look again at Isaiah 61. In verse 1 it tells us that **"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because [He's] anointed me to bring [the] good news...."** (Isaiah 61:1) He goes on to explain it's for the afflicted, the brokenhearted, the captives, the prisoners. In this message is **"...the favorable year of the LORD...."** In this message is a **"...day of vengeance [from]...God...."** (Isaiah 61:2) It will bring comfort to those who are mourning. There'll be an exchange of sad things for good things. (See Isaiah 61:2-3) But then verse 4, where we're gonna spend some time. In 4 through verse 9 there's a transition. It starts with the word **"then"**. Now here's a clue. When you're studying the Bible, when you come across **"then"** you'll see that's a term that will help you understand the sequence of events. What I do in my Bible is I draw a little clock next to it. It helps me realize it's a time phrase. Verse 4 reads this: **"Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; and they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations."** (Isaiah 61:4) Now any time in Old Testament prophecy you hear the term "rebuild" you should get excited. That tells us that God is on the move, that God is promising a restoration. At this time in Isaiah chapter 61 at the initial reading of it, the temple still stands. Jerusalem still has not been affected by the Babylonians. But come a few years in 586 B.C., Jerusalem will be destroyed and so this message then, has a real potent feel to it. There's rebuilding of the ancient ruins, raising up of the former devastations, the desolations that have been going on. Then he

says in verse 5, **“Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.” (Isaiah 61:5)**

Here God is telling us, “I’m in charge of the whole world. And for My people Judah I am going to bring in those, and they will come and work for you. They will come and support you. They will join you in your mission.” Now that’s really interesting because the people of God throughout the Old Testament are often in the opposite position. You remember where they were in Egypt. They were making bricks, not for themselves, but for Pharaoh. In the book of Judges we find them being persecuted by people (like the Midianites), always in slavery. But here He says I’m going to reverse that trend. I’m gonna change things so that you people will be served by, verse 5, “strangers and foreigners”. So what is the role then of the people of God? If God is going to bring restoration and rebuilding of the ancient ruins, and we could say, rebuilding of the temple. What do we see here that will follow? Well in comes, to the land of Israel, strangers who will work for Israel. But look at verse 6. In verse 6 He tells them this will be your role:

“But you will be called the priests of the LORD; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.” (Isaiah 61:6) Okay here we have a title given to the people of God. It’s there in verse 6. **“...You will be called the priests of the LORD....” (Isaiah 61:6)** Now what is a priest? What is the role of a priest?

How does God communicate to His people? In the Old Testament there were two forms of communication. There was a communication that went from God to His people and then there was a communication that went from the people back up to God and you have a two way conversation. Unlike today in the way we are able to speak directly to God, in the way— we didn’t have the sacrificial system and such, and prophets. They had to communicate through other means. Now to go from God to man, that was the role of the prophet, such as the one we’re reading today—the prophet of Isaiah. The prophet’s role was to say, “Thus sayeth the Word of God”. God would give

a message to the prophet and then he would be the one to deliver it to his people. But when they wanted to talk back to Him or they wanted to somehow communicate back to God, man to God, that was the role of the priest. And the priests' job was one who would be communicating man to God in the form of sacrifices. Now a priest in the Old Testament time is not like one that you might see in a modern church where a priest is more like a preacher. He's more like a prophet. And this time the priest's role wasn't always necessarily a teaching role, like we see today, but rather it was one who handled the communication between man and his Creator. And he would do this through sacrifices. He was the one in whom— was to connect the people of God back to God, or connect the people to their God. So he says in Isaiah 61 that "You will be called the priests of God." "...[You'll] **be called the priests of the LORD...as ministers of our God....**" (Isaiah 61:6) That means that the people of Israel, somehow, their role will be to communicate back to God. They are the ones in whom, in a sense, we could say that the creation will know who God is. Let's see; let's go back to Exodus. I want to show you this original reference here in Exodus chapter 19. In Exodus 19, God is speaking to His people, and that are coming out of Egypt and He says this in verse 4, "**You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine.**" (Exodus 19:4-5) Okay, so first He tells them if this is gonna work, you're gonna have to be obedient to My covenant and to My design, to My precepts. He says you'll become My possession among all the peoples. But look at verse 6. "**...You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation....**" (Exodus 19:6) You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Now that's a bit different than you think about the way Israel was set up. Israel was set up in twelve tribes and then they were given the sons of Aaron, who were called the Levites. And they were

the ones who were the priests. They were the ones who were to communicate from God back to man, managing the sacrificial system. So within the people of Israel you have a group selected and appointed to be priests. But when you take the whole people of Israel and you place them in all earth—all of creation—what you have is, now that people of Israel become a kingdom of priests. In other words, all the people are to be a communication device in a sense, a channel, a means of talking back to God, a means of connecting to God. But it's more than just communication, isn't it? It wasn't just to seek out advice or counsel, but oftentimes the communication was all because of sin. Because man had sinned against God, that communication had to come through the sacrificial system. The priesthood's role was to bring, in a sense, reconciliation between sinful man and a holy Creator, a holy God. And He's telling the people of Israel, "Listen, I'm going to restore you; I'm going to rebuild you." And this is what it's going to be like. Foreigners will now come into your land. That the strangers will now come in and you will now become a light; you'll become priesthood to the foreigners, to the strangers. That's God's design for His people Israel. That is the way God has shaped His people. That is why He has given them the precepts and the covenants and the ways of God. That is why He has established a relationship with them via a covenant to say, "Listen, I've set you apart. I've made you different. I've made you different and so what I want you to be is priesthood to the world." Isn't that interesting? If we were to go back and ask some of the folks that were reading Isaiah initially, "Did you ever dream that your job, your role on this earth were to be priests of the Lord and ministers of our God?" He goes on to say, "This is what I'm about. Look at verse, 7 and 8. **"Instead of your shame you will have a double portion. Instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land. Everlasting joy will be theirs. Everlasting joy will be theirs for I, the Lord love justice. I hate robbery in the burnt offering**

and I will faithfully give them their recompense and make an everlasting covenant with them.” (Isaiah 61:7-8) Now look at this next verse, verse 9. This is the result of the covenant God will make with His people. **“Then, there’s that phrase again. Verse 9, their offspring will be known among the nations and their descendants in the midst of the peoples. All who see them will recognize them because they are the offspring whom the LORD has blest.” (Isaiah 61:9)** Why has He blessed them? So that they may be a priesthood. That they may be a kingdom that would represent God to the rest of the world. That they may be priests of the Lord and ministers of their God.

PART TWO

David: Hi! Welcome back to “Precepts for Life”. We’re studying Isaiah 61 and we’re specifically looking at the role that God has for His people. Look again at Isaiah 61, verse 5. He says, **“Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.” (Isaiah 61:5)** Those strangers, those foreigners are Gentiles outside of the nation of Israel. Verse 6: **“But you...,”** he goes on to tell us the role of Israel, **“...[but you] will be called the priests of the LORD; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God....” (Isaiah 61:6)** If that is the case, if that is what God has shaped His people to be, and we saw earlier in Exodus chapter 19, verse 6 that that was His design for His people, it’s to become a kingdom of priests to the world, we see that part of the prophecy in Isaiah 61 is that God will restore them to that role, that they will eventually, again, be called priests of the LORD and ministers of God. What does that have to do with us and the New Testament? What does that have to do with us who say we are not Jews? We’re not Hebrews, but we’re followers of Jesus Christ. We’re part of this kingdom that Jesus ushers in. What is our role? Well Peter writes a letter to Christians. In 1 Peter he writes a letter to Christians who are being scattered and persecuted. They are called the “dispersed ones,” and

they're not dispersed because of real estate prices getting out of hand. They're dispersed because, simply, they have decided to follow Jesus Christ. They have decided to align themselves with His agenda and with His Word and His mission. And so they're suffering persecution. And so Peter is writing this letter to them to teach them how to be good, suffering Christians. "Yes, you will suffer," he tells them over and over again, but how will they do that? Well we find in chapter 2 verse 1 he says this, **"...[Put] aside all malice and all deceit...hypocrisy...envy and...slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."** (1 Peter 2:1-2) Okay so he's, he's teaching them, "Listen, represent God well. Represent Jesus well, put aside those things that are a shame to Him, those things like malice and deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander. In verse 3 he says, **"If [you've] tasted the kindness of the Lord."** (1 Peter 2:3) In other words, "If this light is going to be yours, then let it flow out of you. Let it remove those things which are not representative of My kingdom." And verse 4 says this, **"And coming to Him [coming to God] as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood...,**" why? **"...To offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus."** (1 Peter 1:4-5) Look again 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 4. Jesus is described as a **"...living stone which [was] rejected by men..."** (1 Peter 2:4) This is a theme that we find throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament that Jesus was, one: that either He was a stone that you built upon, as a cornerstone, or He was a stone that you stumbled over. In other words, it's either or with Jesus. It's not, "I'll take a little bit of what You're saying and mix it with what I want and I'll build my own kingdom." Jesus was very clear. Jesus is described as a **"...living stone...rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God."** (1 Peter 2:4) I love verse 5. Verse 5 compares us or relates us and connects us to this picture with

Jesus. **“You also...,”** you believers, those who follow Jesus, **“...[you also], as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood....” (1 Peter 2:5)** Here we have an idea that we are building. We are actually making up that facility where God and man come together, where there’s communication and reconciliation. He says you’re being built into that house and here’s why. You are a holy priesthood. You are a holy priesthood. And your role is to offer up spiritual sacrifices. He then goes on to describe us in verse 9 as this. **“...You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession...,”** why? **“...So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness [and] into...marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)** Isn’t that a great picture? What is my role then? If I’m gonna be a follower of Jesus, if I’m gonna be one who takes seriously the Word of God and say that the Scriptures has everything to do with my life and my choices and my relationships and my decisions, if I’m gonna take that seriously, then I need to see: What does the Bible say my role is? Well we saw in the prophecy of Isaiah that God in His restoration—one of the acts of His restoration, will be to take people who were once wandering away from Him in rebellion and in sin, and He says, “I’m gonna take you and I’m gonna bind you up—the brokenhearted. I’m gonna release you from those things that held you captive. And here’s what I’m gonna do: I’m gonna make you My representatives. I’m gonna show the world who I am, God Almighty, through you. I’m gonna use you to be My priests, to communicate back and forth with Me. I’m gonna be the One who will bring about reconciliation.” That’s been God’s design all along for the people of Israel. God never decided to build some small clique of people and exclude others from Himself, but rather He decided to pick this nation Israel and bless them so much that they would be changed so drastically that the world would want to know what is up. What is, what is going on with you? You only worship one God. You only worship the one true Yahweh. Why do you limit yourself this

way? I wonder do we have the same question asked to us. As New Testament believers, as followers of Jesus Christ, do you ever wonder what your role is? Why did God make me? Why did God shape me the way He did? Why has God called me to follow Him? We find out from 1 Peter chapter 2 written to those who were dispersed that our role is to be a kingdom of priesthood. Look what he says again in verse 9. “...[We] **are** [to be] **a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation....**” That’s a nation that is set apart. That’s a nation that has been so affected by the gospel, by the truths of God that we are now different and set apart. And he said this is what you’re for, that “...**you may proclaim....**” Proclaim what? “...[Proclaim] **the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness [and] into...marvelous light.**” (1 Peter 2:9) Our role, My Friend, if you’re a follower of Christ is to let your light shine. Jesus defines it for us in Matthew chapter 5, verse 14. He tells us of our identity. He says, “**You are the light of the world....**” (Matthew 5:14) What does it mean to be “the light of the world”? He says [you’re to take your light and you’re to let it shine so that others may see your good deeds and that I may be praised, I, the heavenly Father, may be glorified.] (PARAPHRASE Matthew 5:16) That is your role, My Friend. You are a royal priesthood, a priesthood of God to a watching world.