

The King of Zion and the Epicenter of God's Salvation *The Book of Isaiah*

Babylon: Why Sin is a Magnet for More Sin *Isaiah 13:1 – 14:27*

Introduction: Be Careful About Getting What You Want

One of the most painful lessons we learn in life is the reality that our sins are a magnet for other people who sin in the same way. I got a really good laugh out of an email exchange. It's the collision of two arrogant people: an anonymous student at NYU's Stern Business School and Scott Galloway, professor at the school, founder of redenvelope.com, and fan of William Wallace. The student sent Professor Galloway an email the day after being kicked out of his class.

Prof. Galloway,

I would like to discuss a matter with you that bothered me. Yesterday evening I entered your 6pm Brand Strategy class approximately 1 hour late. As I entered the room, you quickly dismissed me, saying that I would need to leave and come back to the next class. After speaking with several students who are taking your class, they explained that you have a policy stating that students who arrive more than 15 minutes late will not be admitted to class.

As of yesterday evening, I was interested in three different Monday night classes that all occurred simultaneously. In order to decide which class to select, my plan for the evening was to sample all three and see which one I like most. Since I had never taken your class, I was unaware of your class policy. I was disappointed that you dismissed me from class considering (1) there is no way I could have been aware of your policy and (2) considering that it was the first day of evening classes and I arrived 1 hour late (not a few minutes), it was more probable that my tardiness was due to my desire to sample different classes rather than sheer complacency.

I have already registered for another class but I just wanted to be open and provide my opinion on the matter.

Regards,
xxxx

Here is Professor Galloway's reply:

Thanks for the feedback. I, too, would like to offer some feedback.

Just so I've got this straight...you started in one class, left 15-20 minutes into it (stood up, walked out mid-lecture), went to another class (walked in 20 minutes late), left that class (again, presumably, in the middle of the lecture), and then came to my class. At that point (walking in an hour late) I asked you to come to the next class which "bothered" you.

Correct?

You state that, having not taken my class, it would be impossible to know our policy of not allowing people to walk in an hour late. Most risk analysis offers that in the face of substantial uncertainty, you opt for the more conservative path or hedge your bet (e.g., do not show up an hour late until you know the professor has an explicit policy for tolerating disrespectful behavior, check with the TA before class, etc.). I hope the lottery winner that is your recently crowned Monday evening Professor is teaching Judgement and Decision Making or Critical Thinking.

In addition, your logic effectively means you cannot be held accountable for any code of conduct before taking a class. For the record, we also have no stated policy against bursting into show tunes in the middle

of class, urinating on desks or taking that revolutionary hair removal system for a spin. However, xxxx, there is a baseline level of decorum (i.e., manners) that we expect of grown men and women who the admissions department have deemed tomorrow's business leaders.

xxxx, let me be more serious for a moment. I do not know you, will not know you and have no real affinity or animosity for you. You are an anonymous student who is now regretting the send button on his laptop. It's with this context I hope you register pause...REAL pause xxxx and take to heart what I am about to tell you:

xxxx, get your sh** together.

Getting a good job, working long hours, keeping your skills relevant, navigating the politics of an organization, finding a live/work balance...these are all really hard, xxxx. In contrast, respecting institutions, having manners, demonstrating a level of humility...these are all (relatively) easy. Get the easy stuff right xxxx. In and of themselves they will not make you successful. However, not possessing them will hold you back and you will not achieve your potential which, by virtue of you being admitted to Stern, you must have in spades. It's not too late xxxx...

Again, thanks for the feedback.

Professor Galloway

I'm sure the student was not expecting that. It's interesting to see the blogosphere recognize that this was a collision of big egos. I think Professor Galloway makes a very good point, although you can also see why he has a reputation for being arrogant. The student was arrogant in treating professors not as people but as a smorgasbord, simply things to be consumed. And that arrogance drew him into an encounter with someone equally arrogant, and far more powerful.

Isaiah's Spiritual and Political Context

This is what we are studying in Isaiah this week. Sin is a magnet for other sin. We've been in a series on the book of Isaiah. The whole book of Isaiah can be pictured as a ripple that spreads over the whole world, starting from Jerusalem. Isaiah can be summed up as 'the King of Zion and the Epicenter of God's Salvation.' Isaiah 1 – 5 is about Jerusalem and the sins of Jerusalem. The time is sometime in the 730's BC, a few years after the death of King Uzziah but before the 721 BC takeover of Assyria. Isaiah knew something was coming. He saw that the sin of the leaders in Jerusalem especially was a magnet for other people with the same sins. In Jewish law, each family was supposed to have their share of land. There was supposed to be equality. But the leaders in Jerusalem had sucked wealth and power to themselves. They had oppressed the poor in Israel and Judah (Isa.1:15 – 17, 21 – 23), especially in the city Jerusalem, which was supposed to be the city of holiness, proper boundaries observed, and love. Now it was the place of oppression (3:14 – 15). Judges and leaders took bribes (5:23) and rebelled against God's law (1:23). They have instead delighted in beauty pageants (3:16 – 24), and drinking games (5:22).

And when someone amasses wealth in one place, they become a target. So Jerusalem caught the eye of other nations. Those nations were drawn to invade Jerusalem. Isaiah 6 – 12 are God's word to the southern kingdom of Judah and then the northern kingdom of Israel. Because of their sins, they have drawn the attention of the frightening empire of Assyria, which will march from the north and swoop down on the Northern Kingdom of Israel and swallow it whole. This raises the question urgently: How will God defeat the Assyrians?

Isaiah's surprising answer is: *Babylon*. That brings us to Isaiah 13 – 14, the oracle about Babylon. Babylon will punish the punishers, the Assyrians. But God will punish Babylon. God will always punish the punishers. How? By giving them over to their own choices, as Paul says in Romans 1. Then they become magnets for other people with the same sin. I think God doesn't even have to do anything special. He just lets human history run its course.

The Universal Kingdom: Isaiah 13 – 27

Isaiah 13 – 27 is a section about Babylon, other nations, and political-military events surrounding Jerusalem and the people of God. Commentator J. Alec Motyer calls this section 'The Universal Kingdom.' He writes, 'One feature of the structure bears on the meaning of the whole: in each case the people of God, occupying the fourth place in

the lists, are surrounded by the peoples of the world. In the first list, these are Babylon to the north, Philistia to the west, Moab to the east and Egypt to the south. In the second list they are Babylon to the north, Edom to the south, Arabia to the east, and Tyre to the west. Their position makes them vulnerable. Where will they seek security? But their position also makes them central – central to the way the Lord runs the world and very much at the centre of his eschatological world-view.’¹

A	B	C
Babylon (13:1 – 14:27) <i>Political overthrow</i>	Babylon (21:1 – 10) <i>Religious overthrow</i>	The City of Emptiness (24:1 – 20) <i>Broken laws (24:5)</i> <i>Broken gates (24:12)</i>
Philistia (14:28 – 32) <i>A Davidic king will yet reign in Zion</i>	Edom (21:11 – 12) <i>Indefinite continuance of things as they are</i>	Zion’s King (24:21 – 23) <i>‘After many days’</i>
Moab (15:1 – 16:14) <i>Moab in need, but through pride refuses shelter in Zion</i>	Arabia (21:13 – 17) <i>Desert tribes in need; no ultimate refuge in mutual security</i>	The great banquet (25:1 – 12) <i>All nations feasted in Zion save Moab, excluded by pride</i>
Damascus/Ephraim (17:1 – 18:7) <i>Strong cities forsaken (17:9); the forgotten rock (17:10)</i>	The Valley of Vision, Jerusalem (22:1 – 25) <i>The city torn down (22:10)</i>	The City of God (26:1 – 20) <i>The strong city (26:1); the everlasting rock (26:4)</i>
Egypt (19:1 – 20:6) <i>Co-equal membership: Egypt, Assyria, and Israel (19:24 – 25)</i>	Tyre (23:1 – 18) <i>Holiness to the Lord (23:18)</i>	The final gathering (27:1 – 13) <i>The harvest from Egypt and Assyria (27:12 – 13)</i>

In each of these cases, God is saying that He will deal with each nation according to its posture towards Him, including His chosen people, Israel, and ultimately the embodiment of Israel, the Messiah the King. I’m going to take a sampling of these nations over the next few weeks to get a sense of the variety of interactions between God and these peoples.

Chiastic Structure of Isaiah 13:1 – 14:27²

As we look more closely at this smaller section about Babylon, I want to explore this as an example of how God deals with human sin.

- A. God beckons Babylon: the beckoning hand, God’s purpose declared (13:2 – 16)
- B. The overthrow of Babylon: the end of the kingdom, the fact of divine overthrow (13:17 – 22)
- C. The security and future of the Lord’s people: God’s purpose for Israel (14:1 – 2)
- B’. The overthrow of Babylon: the end of the king, the explanation of divine overthrow (14:3 – 23)
- A’. Babylon overthrows Assyria: the outstretched hand, God’s purpose enacted and validated (14:24 – 27)

The chiasm structure is where the first point matches the last point. The second point matches the second to last point. And the center point is the main point.

A. God Beckons Babylon: Isaiah 13:1 – 13

So let’s begin with the outer points. God calls Babylon to follow in the footsteps of the Assyrians.

^{13:1}The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

² Lift up a standard on the bare hill,

¹ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Interpretation and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p.132

² Modified by Mako Nagasawa from J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Interpretation and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p.135

Raise your voice to them,
Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the **nobles**.
³ I have commanded My consecrated ones,
I have even called My mighty warriors,
My proudly exulting ones,
To execute My anger.

In v.2, Isaiah says, 'Lift, raise, wave the hand.' A signal goes out. There are beacons lit. God waves His hand for the Babylonians to come after the Assyrians. The Babylonians???

Now a lot of people read this and ask, 'Does this mean that God controls Babylon? Does God still control nations? So did God bring Arab terrorists against the U.S. on 9/11? Is He behind the rise of China?' I would say no. Because God does not cause people to sin. When you sin, do you say that God is the cause of your sinning? No. So when other people sin, do we say that He is the cause of their sin? No. When God says in 13:3, 'I have commanded My consecrated ones, I have even called My mighty warriors, My proudly exulting ones, to execute My anger,' He is not saying that He caused their sin. Instead, God is simply saying that what happens to Israel is His province. God never said anything about the U.S. or any other nation. But Israel in the First Testament is His province. And He did see that some other nations would sin with 100% likelihood, and He was going to use them to discipline Israel. When the Israelites sinned, especially in Jerusalem, their sins became a magnet for the nations around them. I just want to give you another concrete example of that: A long time ago, God lived in a tent – not glamorous, not magnificent, not wealthy. Just a tent, called the tabernacle. But then King David and King Solomon built Him a temple, ten times bigger and decked out in gold. Solomon taxed the people up the wazoo in order to build that thing. That was sinful. And that temple became a bullseye, a magnet, and a sign in the capital of Israel that said, 'Come rob me,' as Isaiah will point out when Hezekiah shows it off to the Babylonian ambassador in Isa.38 – 39.

When the Jewish leaders sinned, they drew the interest of others who were like them, but better at it. Here is a description of these ancient empires: 'It is perfectly clear...that the immense wealth of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empire, to name no more, was largely dependent on the institution of slavery. Likewise it should be equally clear that this wealth would have been far greater and the power displayed far more durable, if the rulers of these empires had not given such full scope to their insensate sadism.'³ Those rulers used forced labor slavery, controlled the food supply, and threatened their own people with starvation.⁴ So when they saw the wealth of Jerusalem, since that wealth came from the same methods they used, they want...what? Well they see that there is more wealth there, that there is something to exploit. They are drawn like moths to a flame. Sin draws similar sins.

That is why Isaiah says in v.2, 'Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of *the nobles*.' The nobles are *the leaders* – the royal household, the priests in the temple, the so-called prophets and religious leaders of Jerusalem. They are the ones who wanted to be like the nobles of all the other nations. So those are the people who will get a knock on the door. But their visitors would not be polite guests. They will want secrets. They will want resources. They will want everything inside. And God, in the midst of this invasion, was still calling the Jewish leaders to repent.

A'. Babylon Overthrows Assyria: Isa.14:24 – 27

But what good can come out of this? The Babylonians have their own reasons for plundering the Middle East. But how will God use it to benefit His people and advance His purposes? And now let's look on the other side of the section. Why did God call Babylon to come? To punish the punishers: Assyria.

^{14:24} The LORD of hosts has sworn saying,
'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened,
And just as I have planned so it will stand,
²⁵ To break Assyria in My land,
And I will trample him on My mountains.
Then his yoke will be removed from them

³ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformation, and Its Prospects* (London: HBJ, 1961), p.111

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.108

And his burden removed from their shoulder.

²⁶ This is the plan devised against the whole earth;

And this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations.

²⁷ For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it?

And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?'

Your sins attract people with the same sins. Perhaps not right away, but eventually it does. If you were to start selling drugs, you would draw the attention of other people who sell drugs, who have a lot more experience than you. In the movie *The Godfather*, Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, heads up an organized crime family and tries to expand, but discovers that the organized crime business is filled with powerful people that go all the way back to Europe. They are way more powerful than him. In the Disney movie *The Lion King*, Scar, the evil uncle, makes a deal with the hyenas. He is hungry for power. They are just hungry. So his sin and their sin bring them together. He makes an alliance with them to trick the Lion King Mufasa into a ravine to save his son Simba, only to get stampeded by wildebeests and killed by the stampede. Simba is alone and runs away. But Scar thinks that he can harness the hyenas' hunger and use them to his own advantage. But the collision happens. He cannot control them. And when Simba finally casts them all out, the hyenas turn on Scar. They eat him. Your sins draw you to people with similar sins. But all throughout, God is shouting your name, trying to get your attention, calling you back to Him.

Illus: When I was young, I wanted to be popular. In high school, I was the captain of the water polo and swim teams my freshman year. My name would be announced over the homeroom PA system for setting a school record in swimming events. Suddenly upperclassmen were inviting me to parties. People wanted me around, and that kind of thing. But in the middle of high school, I started questioning myself, asking a lot of questions, wrestling with my own pain, and started looking at Jesus. I'm really glad for that, because at around that time, I was exposed to some very serious athletes and we talked about blood doping. For those of you who don't know, blood doping is whether you take out your own blood with a needle, when you're rested and have a lot of oxygen in your blood. So you store your blood in a certain way, and then when you have a competition, you inject your own blood back into yourself. Then you have more oxygen in your bloodstream, and more energy. The best thing about it is it's untraceable, because it's not a steroid or a drug; it's just your own blood. Now there was something very tempting for me in that. And looking back, I wonder if there was something in my heart I wasn't paying attention to. Because at around that time, I also cheated in a class with another friend, got caught, and got disciplined. Why was I being drawn to other people who not only did well, but cheated? In my quest for popularity, was my sin leading me to other people who sinned like I did?

That is one weird thing about sin. And I thank our Lord Jesus that he got my attention, helped me respond to him, and helped to reshape my heart. Because I have no doubt in my mind that if I had continued down that path, my sins would have led me to more sins. And my sins would have drawn me into a collision with other people with similar sins. And that would have been devastating. And yet I also have no doubt that all throughout, God would have been shouting my name, trying to get my attention, and teaching me that those collisions are bitter.

The lesson: God lets people escalate their own sins. And when that happens, an ugly reality follows. Jeremiah says, 'Your own wickedness will correct you and your apostasies will reprove you. Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God' (Jer.2:19). And Paul says in Romans 1 that human beings 'exchange' our knowledge of God for evil (1:23, 25, 26). In response, 'God gave them over' (1:24, 26, 28).

B. The Overthrow of Babylon Stated: Isa.13:17 – 22

But of course, the next question is, 'Who will punish Babylon?' And the answer is: 'Another empire.' The Medo-Persian Empire.

^{13:17} Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them,

Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold.

¹⁸ And their bows will mow down the young men,

They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb,

Nor will their eye pity children.

¹⁹ And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride,

Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

This is how the punishers get punished. That's how the judgers get judged. Jerusalem sins. Assyria swoops in and punishes Jerusalem. Then Babylon swoops in and punishes Assyria. Then the Medes will swoop in and punish Babylon. And Babylon was overthrown when the Medo-Persian armies dammed up the Euphrates River, marched through the dry riverbed under the gates into the city of Babylon, and took the city overnight. King Belshazzar was overthrown and killed.

B'. The Overthrow of Babylon Explained: Isa.14:3 – 23

Now on the other side of this chiasm is Isaiah's explanation for how Babylon falls. The king of Babylon will be killed. The man who led Babylon will be cast down to the ground.

^{14:3} And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved,
⁴ that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,
'How the oppressor has ceased,
And how fury has ceased!
⁵ The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,
The scepter of rulers
⁶ Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes,
Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.
⁷ The whole earth is at rest and is quiet;
They break forth into shouts of joy.
⁸ Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying,
'Since you were laid low, no tree cutter comes up against us.'
⁹ Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come;
It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth;
It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.
¹⁰ They will all respond and say to you,
'Even you have been made weak as we,
You have become like us.
¹¹ Your pomp and the music of your harps
Have been brought down to Sheol;
Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you
And worms are your covering.'
¹² How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
You who have weakened the nations!
¹³ But you said in your heart,
'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
And I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the recesses of the north.
¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'
¹⁵ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,
To the recesses of the pit.
¹⁶ Those who see you will gaze at you,
They will ponder over you, saying,
'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,
¹⁷ Who made the world like a wilderness
And overthrew its cities,
Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?'
¹⁸ All the kings of the nations lie in glory,

Each in his own tomb.

¹⁹ But you have been cast out of your tomb
Like a rejected branch,
Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,
Who go down to the stones of the pit
Like a trampled corpse.

²⁰ You will not be united with them in burial,
Because you have ruined your country,
You have slain your people.
May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.

Even this king's dead body will be rejected and dishonored. The book of Daniel records the incident when the Jewish prophet Daniel, serving at the court of King Belshazzar of Babylon, read the handwriting on the wall. 'That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.' (Dan.5:30 – 31) Everything he had is taken away from him, even an honorable burial.



Illus: The villains I love to hate are the Thénardiers in *Les Miserables*.⁵ They are real villains, and their lives were headed this way. They run a shady tavern, an inn, where they rob their guests by charging them extra and then literally stealing from them. They take advantage of a young woman named Fantine. Fantine has a little girl named Cosette, and pays the Thenardiers to take care of Cosette while she works. They probably tricked Fantine into this deal, because they don't care about Cosette at all. Monsieur Thenardier keeps calling her Colette instead of Cosette, and Madame Thenardier treats her like a slave girl. Towards the end of the musical, Monsieur Thenardier is roaming through the streets and the sewers. A student revolt just occurred in the streets of Paris and there are dead bodies there. He sings:

Here's a tasty ring
Pretty little thing

⁵ Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*, translated by Julie Rose, p.316 describe the Thenardiers as being very ugly people. Madame Thénardier is described as 'tall, blond, ruddy, barrel-like, brawny, boxy, huge, and agile.' Monsieur Thénardier is described as being 'a skinny little runt, pale, angular, bony, rickety, who looked sick but was as fit as a fiddle...'

Wouldn't want to waste it
That would really be a crime
Thank you sir, I'm in your debt
Here's another toy
Take it off the boy
His heart's no longer going
And he's lived his little time
But his watch is ticking yet!

Well, someone's got to clean them up, my friends
Before the little harvest
Disappears into the mud
Someone's got to collect their odds and ends
When the gutters run with blood.

It's a world where the dog eats the dog
Where they kill for bones in the street
And God in His Heaven
He don't interfere
'Cause he's dead as the stiff's at my feet
I raise my eyes to see the heavens
And only the moon looks down
The harvest moon shines down!

And at the end of the story, they've become rich; they made it into the 'upper crust.' Something deep in my bones cries out, 'No!! That's an injustice!!' They're getting away with it! But I noticed something else in the story. Jean Valjean settles Fantine's debt with them releasing her conscience. So the Thenardiers don't have any psychological pull on Fantine any more, and she dies in peace. Then, Jean Valjean goes to rescue Cosette from them. He pays them generously, even though he can see right away that they treat her like a slave girl, because he doesn't want to haggle for Cosette while she's standing right there. So Valjean rescues Cosette from them. They have a daughter named Eponine, whose character could have been really ugly and bitter, but she falls in love with Marius. Her heart is tested because Marius has fallen in love with Cosette. But instead of being ugly and bitter like her parents, Eponine learns to love them both, and to love being loving. She dies in his arms because of a stray bullet. The implication is that she has opened herself up to God, and God frees her from the poison of her parents. Their little son Gavroche is told by his parents to live in the street, because he would have a better life there. But he demonstrates courage and dies with honor, hoping for better things, so he too opens himself up to God, and God frees him from his parents in the end. Finally, the Thenardiers try to blackmail Jean Valjean and Cosette but it backfires. The ring they have taken turns out to be Marius'. He recognizes it and now knows that he was rescued by Jean Valjean. So the Thenardiers have no leverage on any of them anymore, and Marius and Cosette throw them out of their wedding reception.

That is how God works. It is not true that He don't interfere. He is always interfering, calling people to Himself and His goodness, calling people out from the evil clutches of the enemy, through their hearts. Notice, starting in v.12, Isaiah's language seems to speak of an Enemy with a capital 'E' behind the enemy with a lowercase 'e'. Who is the Enemy behind the enemy? Who ultimately fell from heaven, and was the star of the morning? Lucifer, the angel we now know as the accuser, the satan. God turns the tables by drawing on people's hearts. In the midst of all this sin, and power struggles, God quietly works in the heart, drawing people into His ultimate victory.

Illus: My wife and I are doing relational counseling for a couple where the guy is controlling and has been physically violent. As the woman grows spiritually, and says yes to Jesus more, heals from her lack of self-esteem, she will be less and less willing to be controlled. So as she leaves the realm of sin, he may be left behind. I've seen that happen before, where a controlling friend, or girlfriend or boyfriend, gets left behind, outraged. Or, in this case, the guy might also repent, too, and leave the true Enemy behind.

C. The Security and Future of God's People: Isa.14:1 – 2

That brings us to the message of hope for God's people:

^{14:1} When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob
 and again choose Israel,
 and settle them in their own land,
 then strangers will join them
 and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.
² The peoples will take them along
 and bring them to their place,
 and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD
 as male servants and female servants;
 and they will take their captors captive
 and will rule over their oppressors.

This is the center point of the chiasm. That means that this is the real reason all of this is happening. The real reason that God gave the Babylonians the invitation to come into the promised land was to kick out the Assyrians, make the Babylonians extend themselves too far, and then set them up to be ripe pickins for the Medo-Persian Empire to conquer them. All of that is for the purpose of God having compassion on Jacob once again, bringing them back to the land, and blessing them again. They will be independent, and in fact, the Gentiles will somehow join them as part of God's family and the household of faith. They will be victorious over their enemies, but many of their enemies will become their friends.

This became true when the Jews became a Diaspora community. Many became 'God-fearers,' meaning as Jewish as you can be without converting through circumcision. Cornelius, the Roman centurion of Acts 10 was one such person. But ultimately, this was fulfilled when Jesus took to himself the role of Israel in full. Jesus was Israel embodied in himself. That is why he passed through water and wilderness (Mt.3:13 – 4:11), why he goes up onto a mountain to receive God's law into himself (Mt.5:1 – 7:28), not just to *give* the law but to show that he was *receiving* it in himself, and so on. So the proper way to read Isaiah's vision of Israel in the future in Isa.14:2 is to see *Jesus* as the true Israel who makes all God's promises for Israel come true. *Jesus* will possess the Gentile people as an inheritance. *Jesus* will take male and female servants. *Jesus* will take captivity captive. *Jesus* will rule over his oppressors. For Jesus is building God's true family, and God's true humanity.

Illus: Some of you know David Swaim, the pastor of Highrock Arlington. Dave and his wife had adopted 7 children: a white American, a Korean, an African-American, a Mexican, and 3 Rwandans. They recently adopted 4 more. I believe they are biological siblings from Nigeria. I guess when the adoption agency likes you, they just call you whenever there's a need! They don't need to go through a long process of paperwork. When the Swaims received the phone call and found out about these 4 siblings who needed an adoptive family, they asked each of their already adopted children to ask them what they thought. Every one of them said, 'We have to take them, because we were in their shoes.' So they did. That's a great analogy for us in God's family. We have to take others in, we have to welcome them, we have to demonstrate what it's like to live in God's family and not under the authority of others.

Conclusion

1. Your sins are a magnet for other people with similar sins. So if you want reasons to stop sinning, here are two: It's bad for you, and it's bad for others around you.
2. God calls us out of the cycle to truly be His people. In an ultimate sense, certainly, the safest place to be is being obedient to Jesus. Sometimes that's true in a temporal sense as well.
3. God will eventually judge the judge, punish the punisher, and defeat the Enemy behind the enemy. Leave it to Him.