

"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you!" (Isaiah 54:10)

"Even if the mountains were to crumple and the hills disappear, My heart of steadfast, faithful love will never leave you, and My covenant of peace with you will never be shaken," says Yahweh, whose love and compassion will never give up on you! (Isaiah 54:10, Passion version)

Last week's lesson, for the second week in a row, dealt with the great chapter of Isaiah 53, where Isaiah recorded for all posterity the "revelation" He received from God about how He would send His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, as "God in the flesh" (God incarnate!)--to be born and grow up as a man--and give His life, and be offered up as the sacrificial "Lamb of God" (prefigured in the Levitical law)--the "propitiation" for our sin--and thus provide the way for "redemption" and eternal life!

Verses 5-6 (in the KJV) says, "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed! All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all!"

As we saw last week, there are so many verses in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament, revealing how Isaiah's prophetic words would be fulfilled by Christ in His first advent, among them:

- The apostle Paul would write, in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience (speaking of Adam) the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of One the many would be made righteous"!
- And in II Corinthians 5:21, that "God would make Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"!
- Peter, in I Peter 2:24-25, would record how "He would bear our sins in His own body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness"!
- And Hebrews 12:1-2 identifies Him as the "founder and perfecter of our faith...who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is (now) seated at the right hand of the throne of God"!

Isaiah 53:10 says it "pleased the Lord to bruise Him...and put Him to grief...", noting that "the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in His (Servant's) hand...as He would "bare the sin of many"! And so Isaiah 53 ends with the promise of exaltation for the Servant for accomplishing God's plan for the redemption of man!

It's no wonder then that Isaiah 54, our lesson for last night, would begin on a joyful note, announcing the great work of Yahweh's salvation--and what's to come! (You can almost hear Isaiah's words, from Isaiah 43, echoing in the background: "Fear not for I, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior, am with you! For I have redeemed you! You are Mine!")

And here's how Isaiah 54 begins:

"Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; for the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman," says the Lord!"

This the joyful note? "O Barren one"?

Constable notes that it would be cruel to ask a "barren woman" to sing for joy unless you gave her what would make her happy--but that is precisely what Isaiah did because of what the Lord would do!

Constable explains how Isaiah returns here to the metaphor of the Lord's people as His wife, and here "how the theme of the barrenness of human strength and the bounty that the Lord can provide supernaturally is common throughout Scripture (e.g., Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Elizabeth, et al.), and here another instance of rejoicing because God would miraculously "redeem" and bless those who, because of unbelief, were formerly spiritually barren"!

Oswalt notes that "Just as God could make a barren Sarah more fruitful than a fertile Hagar, so he can take 'those who are dead in trespasses and sins' and use them to bring abundant blessing to the entire world"! (And so the reason to rejoice!)

Then, in verse 2, God calls this formerly "barren woman" (Israel!) to "enlarge her tent, and strengthen the pegs" (signifying that the number of God's people would increase, and would need more space, as their descendants would "possess nations"!).

And, in verse 4, "not to fear," because God would stand by them and bring it to pass! (Just like He stood by in giving Sarah a child in her old age!)

And why this reversal of fortune? Because, verse 5 says, "your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of Hosts, and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel (the transcendent yet immanent God) who is called the God of all the earth"! Wow! (Note the awesome names of God!) A God who, verses 6-8 say, called His people back to Himself, even though they (like an unfaithful wife), had been unfaithful to Him, resulting in a brief separation (while they were in exile), but now restored, with the promise of never to be estranged from them again!

In verse 10, He promises that "even if the mountains were to crumble and the hills disappear (as they might during the millennial period to come!), "His lovingkindness would never leave them and His covenant of peace will not be shaken"! (The Lord declared in Jeremiah 31:31 that "days are coming when He will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Israel, not like the covenant which He made with their fathers in the day He took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord. "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it, and I will be there God, and they shall be My people!"

Motyer notes that "just as the Noahic settlement was formalized into a perpetual covenant, so the work of the Servant leads to a covenant pledging peace in perpetuity for His people!"

In verses 11-17, Isaiah changed his illustration from an estranged wife to a rebuilt city! But, as Constable notes, the point remains the same! The rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem pictures "the joy and security that lay in the future for all God's people, and not just for Israel!"

God's people were presently "wretched and in despair" (as depicted in verse 11), but Isaiah tells of a day to come (presumably in the Millennium) when there will be a "New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (also described in Revelation 21:9-22:5)--and, in verses 12-17, picturing a city of dazzling splendor, built on a "foundation of sapphires, with battlements (or towers) of sparkling rubies, and gates of crystal, and walls of precious stones"! Where, Isaiah prophesies, "their children will be

taught by the Lord, and established in righteousness," and where there will be peace and prosperity, and His people will be "far from oppression and have no fear...and no weapon will be formed against them will prosper"!

Wow! Want to go there?

"This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication (righteousness!) is from Me, declares the Lord!"

What a day that will be!

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