

"It will no longer be said to you, Forsaken," nor to your land will it ever be said, "Desolate"; but you will be called, "My delight is in her," and to Him your land will be, "Married," for the Lord delights in you, and to Him your land will be married!" (Isaiah 62:4)

Last week's lesson on Isaiah 61 began, you'll remember, with Isaiah capturing the amazing prophetic words of God's "Anointed One" (Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world!) where He declared: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has appointed Me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn!" This is the prophecy that Jesus would one day (during His first advent) repeat, and claim to fulfill! Luke 4:18-21 says that Jesus "after coming to Nazareth and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, would take the book of the prophet Isaiah which was handed to Him, open it to this very passage, and read it for all those present to hear"! Then "close the book," and declare (to the astonishment of all!) that "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"! Thus initiating His public ministry!

Interestingly (but not surprisingly, we noted), Jesus would omit the reference in Isaiah 61:2 to the "day of vengeance" and to the other prophecies to follow--because, as Constable notes, He came to fulfill only the first part of this passage during His first advent, but would not the second part, or the remaining prophecies to follow in this chapter, until He returns for His second advent, which is still to come (and more to fulfill)!

That was the highlight of last week's lesson, for sure, but the rest of Isaiah 61, we found, contains some other amazing insights into what is still to occur when Christ returns (at His second advent), to judge the nations and reign over His Millennial Kingdom (which Motyer calls "tailpiece" to this passage)! The focus of this entire section of Isaiah is on the nation and people of Israel, but with ramifications (and applications!) as well for "the church" and for us as believers today!

The Anointed One, speaking through Isaiah, declares that He will (speaking of that day still to come!) "comfort those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a mantle of fainting...and the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified! Then they will rebuild the ancient walls...raise up the former devastations, and repair the ruined cities..." and more!

Then, "they (the people of Israel!) will be called the priests of the Lord," Isaiah writes! In fulfillment of Exodus 19:6, where "on the mountain, in the wilderness of Sinai," God told Moses to tell the sons of Israel that "if they would indeed obey His voice and keep His covenant, they would be His own possession among all the peoples ...and be to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"! (Peter, in I Peter 2:9, we noted, would apply this same terminology to the church, and to us as believers in the present day!)

In Isaiah 61:8, He reiterated His promise to "make an everlasting covenant with them...so that their offspring will be known among the nations...as the offspring who the Lord has blessed"! Then closed with the joyous words, applicable to all of us who have been redeemed and imputed with the righteousness of Christ: "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord! My soul will exalt in My God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with the robe of righteousness... So the Lord will cause the righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations"!

What a way to close Isaiah 61 and prepare us for our lesson, last night, on Isaiah 62! Where Isaiah again records the very words of God in declaring that He "will not be silent--for Zion's sake--until Israel's righteousness goes forth like brightness and her salvation like a torch that is burning, and nations see their righteousness and all kings their glory"! On that day, God declares, "when you (Israel) will be called by a new name and be a crown of beauty, and a royal diadem in the hand of the Lord! It will no longer will it be said to you, 'Forsaken,' nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate'; but you will be called, 'My delight is in her,' and your land, 'Married'! For the Lord delights in you, and to Him your land will be married"! (Isaiah here, or is it the Lord Himself?), uses the metaphor of marriage to illustrate the intimacy, and the permanency of the restored relationship, still to come, between God and His people--and the "promised land"!)

In verses 6-7, God, speaking directly again (note the "I" in this verse), declares that He "has appointed watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem" who are to constantly "remind Him (God!)...and give Him no rest (perhaps a call for their persistent prayers?) until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth," and ends any foreign domination over it! (The "call" for the persistent "prayers and reminders" of the watchmen are obviously more for their benefit and comfort rather than for the Lord who has no memory lapse, or limitations in fulfilling His plan! And it's a reminder for us as well to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem...for peace within its walls," as urged by the Psalmist, in Psalm 122:6!)

Then, in verse 10, God gives a command for the people of Israel to "clear the way for the people; build up, built up (repeated for emphasis!) the highway, remove the stones, (and) lift up a standard over the peoples (Wiersbe says this, "as a signal that they are ready!")--presumably for the salvation of Zion, at the second coming of Christ, who will have "His reward with Him"! When, verse 12, notes that "they will be called 'the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord,' and Jerusalem, "Sought out, a city not forsaken"!

Has God forgotten Israel, some would ask (and particularly in view of all that is happening to Israel in our very day)?

"May it never be!" says the apostle Paul, in Romans 11:1-2! "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew!"

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

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