

For Zion's Sake (Isaiah 61:8–62:12)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (7/7/2019)

Introduction

1. In the first verses of Isaiah 61, the Lord's Messiah was anointed to announce the gospel (good news)—to the spiritually impoverished, to the brokenhearted over their carnal rebellion, to those held captive by sin, and to the spiritually deaf to truth (61:1).

He was also sent “*to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God*” (61:2).

As previously shown, these verses have their fulfillment in the first coming of Christ as Jesus demonstrated at the commencement of His public ministry by reading this passage in the synagogue of Nazareth and announcing to the congregation: “*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*” (Luke 4:18–20). If this text is fulfilled in Jesus' first coming, then the whole passage must also be fulfilled in the gospel age between His first and second comings.

2. What is promised here, and what are we to understand of the fulfillment of the promises?

I. Zion's Day of Salvation

1. The glorious promises that occupy the succeeding verses of chapters 60 through 62 describe “*the year of the LORD's favor.*” Chapter 63 opens with “*the day of vengeance of our God.*”
2. A problem presents itself: when will these promises be fulfilled?
 - a. Isaiah 62:11 and 12 describe the return of the Jews from their Babylonian exile.
 - b. This proclamation, however, must have a second greater fulfillment if the first verses of chapter 61 find their fulfillment in Christ's first coming. Then these also describe the second coming of Jesus and the completion of the salvation of His people in their glorification (Revelation 22:12).
3. The phrase, “*his reward is with him,*” refers to Jesus' coming with the fruits of His suffering, the multitude that He has redeemed by His sacrifice (Revelation 5:9; remember Isaiah 40:9–11).
 - a. Two words need explanation: *reward* and *recompense*. *Reward* is compensation for work accomplished. The negotiation recorded in Isaiah 49:3–6 reveals the reward that the Father gave to His Son for the work of redemption:
 - b. *Recompense* translates two different words in the Hebrew. One is positive and is a synonym for *reward*. The other is negative, speaking of the *retribution* or *vengeance* as the reward to those who have done wrong (Hosea 9:7; Psalm 2:8; 2 Chronicles 15:7).
 - c. The promises of God recorded in the passages before us reveal the compensation due to Christ and His people for their labors to take His gospel to the ends of the earth. The result of this work is declared (61:11).

What a glorious promise is this! But, what do we see? Why are we not realizing this glorious truth?

II. Zion's New Name

1. The first issue before us is to identify *Zion* (62:1).
 - a. Obviously, in Isaiah's day under the old covenant, *Jerusalem* was identified as *Zion* in literal Judah, the capital of the nation.
 - b. However, under the new covenant and the coming of the redeemer, *Zion* is identified as the *church* of the living God. The church fulfills the *Zion* of old because the old failed; whereas the church is victorious. Two New Testament texts prove this (Hebrews 12:22, 23; Galatians 4:24–28).
2. In Isaiah 62:2 the Lord promises, "*The nations shall see your [Zion's] righteousness [or "righteous One," Christ, 1 Timothy 3:16], and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.*" The prophet turns now to address the *church*. What is to be her new name?
 - a. A *name* is much more than a mere appellation to identify someone. *Name* identifies what makes the person stand out—his notoriety, fame, glory, and reputation. Here are three examples (Psalm 76:1; Genesis 35:10–11; Philippians 2:9–11).
 - b. How does God, then, distinguish the church from all else? "*You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God*" (v. 3). How so?
 - 1) Her old name shall no longer be *Azubah* (Forsaken), nor her land be *Shemamah* (Desolate). She shall be made glorious with abundant fruit, so much so that it is declared that a great number of people are coming to the Lord (v. 10).
 - 2) Instead, the church shall be called *Hephzibah* (My Delight Is in Her), and her land shall be called *Beulah* (Married) because "*the LORD delights*" in her (Revelation 19:6–10).
 - 3) What the Lord is saying here is that the church will be fruitful and dynamic, accomplishing all that the Lord intends for her (v. 5; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

What Can We Take Away?

1. Christ says of His church, His bride made holy and righteous in her glorious attire; "You are my only joy!" Let us reciprocate and love the Lord Jesus with all our being. He is worthy of all.
2. The Lord's devotion to His church is wondrous, like that of a bridegroom celebrating his newly married bride. God rejoices over His church. How do we see the church; is it important to us?
3. We live in a time of massive decline in the church. This is largely due to the elevation of self. Many regard the church as a servant whose task is to cater to individual well-being rather than a bride devoted to her Lord. It has resulted in an awful decline in the moral climate of our nation. How shall we respond?
4. When Israel sinned at Sinai, "*Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written'*" (Exodus 32:31, 32). Does your love for the church provoke you to pray such a prayer?