

Last week we looked at the first portion of this chapter and saw the prophetic look forward to the coming of the Messiah. The Servant was to bring the servant Israel back to the LORD (49:5). Today we see the ultimate fulfillment of the Messiah's work. While it gave the captives in Babylon hope for the future, what they would experience was a far short of the predictions of this chapter. God's ultimate plan is so much greater than our ideas of temporary, immediate satisfaction.

*14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me."* Isaiah 49:14 Zion was first mentioned in Scripture when David captured this fortress from the Jebusites. The original meaning of Zion is uncertain, but it is equated with the city of David, Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:7).

Zion is both a place and a people group. We do the same thing today when we call the people in a town's people by the town's name. For example, "I wish Sedona would receive the Gospel." In the psalms, Zion is exhorted to praise the Lord (Psalm 147:12). In Revelation the saints descend as a city called New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2) New Jerusalem is both the place and the people of Zion in this prophecy.

Zion consists of both fulfilled Jews who have come to know Jesus as the Messiah and Gentiles who have been grafted into the Israel of faith (Romans 11:17-18;

Ephesians 2:13-16). It is this Zion that asks if the LORD has forgotten them.

As we go through life in this fallen world, we are experience the frailties of the human condition, persecution from without, pride and selfishness from within, and we wonder if God has forgotten us. Like those captives of Babylon, we wonder if God will ever fulfill His promises to us. We taste the firstfruits of the Spirit and are encouraged to hang on, but how long oh LORD (Ephesians 1:13-14; Revelations 6:10)?

*15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.* Isaiah 49:15 We will be tempted to think God has forgotten us, but as we saw in a previous chapter, He is carrying us through it all (Isaiah 46:4). God says it is remotely possible that a woman might forget the child she nurses and not be compassionate toward the son she gave birth to, but God can never forget you. It is such a strong expression because what you experience in this fallen world will cause you to doubt. But all we need to do is look at the life of the Messiah to realize that suffering is a part of human existence regardless of how much God loves us. Grace uses every painful experience to prepare us for eternity.

Even when you know in your mind you are not forgotten, the hard days of life welcome the comforting blanket of God's

**Commented [PW6]: Ephesians 2:13-16 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

**Commented [PW1]: Isaiah 49:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—

**Commented [PW7]: Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

**Commented [PW8]: Revelation 6:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

**Commented [PW2]: 2 Samuel 5:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.

**Commented [PW9]: Isaiah 46:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.

**Commented [PW3]: Psalm 147:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

**Commented [PW4]: Revelation 21:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

**Commented [PW5]: Romans 11:17-18 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.

love that this verse and the next describes. <sup>16</sup> *Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.* Isaiah 49:16 How the LORD loves us (1John 3:1)! His palms each have a big nail hole that reminds Him of you continually.

The walls are the protection of the city. He is always watching them to see that you are protected. The spiritual walls are faith and self-control (Proverbs 25:28). While they are battered and full of flaming arrows at times, the LORD'S eyes are on them to see that those gifts of the Spirit are withstand the attacks.

While I have made a personal application of the verses above, they are more specifically applicable to the bride of Christ just before the rapture. This world will grow increasingly hedonistic and anti-Christian in the days ahead. The new holocaust is already underway<sup>2</sup>, and its main victims are followers of Jesus. That will only increase until the day the LORD returns and lifts us out of this mess. He will deal with Babylon the Great like He dealt with Babylon of old.

<sup>17</sup> *Your builders make haste; your destroyers and those who laid you waste go out from you.* Isaiah 49:17 This was exactly what happened after the return under Nehemiah (Nehemiah 6:15-16). Those who assist in the building of New Jerusalem will make haste. The destroyers who were not annihilated at the Second Coming will run from the saints in glory.

<sup>18</sup> *Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the LORD, you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does.* Isaiah 49:18 This is about the nations of the earth honoring New Jerusalem in the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Isaiah describes it more in detail in chapter 60. After a period of gross darkness, the Israel of God becomes a light to the world. The LORD will be the light of the city, and the world will bring their treasures to it (Isaiah 60:2-5).

I'm sure those who returned from Babylon were hoping it would be fulfilled in their time, but the Messiah of the first portion of the chapter had not yet come. I wonder if the Jews of the early church thought about the fulfillment. Perhaps that is one reason why they expected the Lord to return at any moment. The world was dark in those days of Roman persecution, but not as dark as it will become in the days ahead.

<sup>19</sup> *"Surely your waste and your desolate places and your devastated land—surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away.* Isaiah 49:19 Analysts are already predicting a space crisis for the present Jerusalem by 2030. Israel is slightly larger than New Jersey and by that time will have the same population or greater. The difference is that a large part of Israel has the Negev desert (Zechariah 10:10). Refugees from Sudan are pouring in from the south

**Commented [PW10]: 1 John 3:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**Commented [PW11]: Proverbs 25:28 (ESV)**

<sup>28</sup> A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

**Commented [PW14]: Isaiah 60:2-5 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

<sup>3</sup> And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.

<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

**Commented [PW12]:** Gordon-Cornwall Theological Seminary has estimated 1 million Christians have been martyred between 2000-2010.

**Commented [PW13]: Nehemiah 6:15-16 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.

<sup>16</sup> And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

**Commented [PW15]: Zechariah 10:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> I will bring them home from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria, and I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon, till there is no room for them.

while Jews are still migrating from the old Soviet bloc. That is why there is such an uproar over settlements. Israel desperately needs them, but Palestinians feel it is an encroachment on their limited space as well.

*<sup>20</sup> The children of your bereavement will yet say in your ears: 'The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.'* Isaiah 49:20 This is already the case. Jews from all over the world have returned to Israel and need space to live. In the Millennium everyone will want to be near Zion except those who hate the Lord and His people. The persecutors of the past will want to be as far away as they can get.

*<sup>21</sup> Then you will say in your heart: 'Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?'* Isaiah 49:21 When Israel gained sovereignty over the land again in the 1948, Jews began pouring into the land. Many were expelled from surrounding Muslim nations without their possessions, taking only what they could carry. Then the immigration began from all over the entire world. This verse has surely been said many times over the past seventy years. But imagine what the immigration will be like in the Millennium when spiritual Israel from around the world wants to live near the throne of Jesus in the restored kingdom of David.

The verse reminds me of China. When missionaries were forced to leave the country there were so few active indigenous works. No one really knew for decades if Christianity was surviving. Once China began to open up a bit, we found it not only survived, but thrived. The largest nationality of believers of the world is now Chinese. Who has borne these? From where have these come? They came out of the Cultural Revolution that persecuted believers. The Lord raised them up. God will use us, but He doesn't need us. He can raise up leaders all on His own. He is a mighty God who can do anything (Jeremiah 32:17).

In the Millennial Kingdom, we will witness all those who have become a part of New Jerusalem and ask the same question. Then we will really understand that salvation is the work of God. Sure, He lets us participate in His work, and we should always look for opportunities to join Him in His work, but it is His work.

When we get to heaven we will see just how far and wide the rivers of the Holy Spirit that flowed through our lives became. When you are near the source of a river, you have no idea what it will become. The few souls that the Spirit of the Lord touched through us may have multiplied so that you find you have more spiritual children than an evangelist (Isaiah 54:1). **There is a great difference between obedience out of a loving relationship with the Lord and self-initiative.** We can do out of duty what we think we are supposed to do, and even

**Commented [PW16]: Jeremiah 32:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> 'Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.

**Commented [PW17]: Isaiah 54:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD.

do it sacrificially, yet bear little or no fruit. But obeying the Holy Spirit, letting the river flow through you, will produce more than you will see in this life (John 4:14).

*<sup>22</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders." Isaiah 49:22* It happened to a minor extent after the Babylonian captivity. It happened in a much greater way in 1948 and the years that followed. It is still going on with ministries like Ezra International. But the ultimate fulfillment will be in the return at the beginning of the Millennium (Isaiah 11:12).

*<sup>23</sup> Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD;* Isaiah 49:23a The captives in Babylon couldn't imagine this would ever be possible. But Cyrus did what they thought no Gentile King would ever do. He restored them to their land and even helped finance the rebuilding of the Temple. But that was just a shadow of the service the world will render in the Millennium.

In that day, the powers of the world will have been put to shame at Armageddon. Jesus will have shown the world that they are powerless against Him. We will see in future chapters in Isaiah that the world will realize Jesus is Almighty and that

those who make up spiritual Israel are His chosen ones (Isaiah 60:16). The world will want the favor of New Jerusalem. Justice will go out from Zion.

If nations want blessings, they will know from whence they come (Zechariah 14:16-17). The meek will inherit the earth and the once mighty ones will do their bidding (Matthew 5:5).

*<sup>23b</sup> those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.*" Isaiah 49:23b This promise is repeated several times in Scripture, because our tendency is to be like King Saul. He saw his army drifting away. He saw the enemy growing in strength, and instead of obeying the prophet Samuel and waiting for him, he made a sacrifice to the Lord on his own (1 Samuel 13:8-9). Of course the minute he did so, Samuel showed up. And that was the start of Saul's downward spiral that ended in his death and David being enthroned. Learn to wait on the Lord.

**We look at conditions instead of to the Lord. When we do, we jump into panic mode and act on our own, nearly always making the wrong decisions.** How do you think the battle for Jericho would have gone had Joshua not met with the Captain of the hosts (Joshua 6:2)? Why would we fare any better? Our ideas are rarely God's ideas (Isaiah 55:8). Wait and get His direction. Then He promises you will mount up with wings of eagles. You will run and not be weary. You will walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31) In your own effort you will not have the strength to endure.

**Commented [PW20]: Isaiah 60:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings; and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

**Commented [PW18]: John 4:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

**Commented [PW21]: Zechariah 14:16-17 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.

<sup>17</sup> And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them.

**Commented [PW22]: Matthew 5:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

**Commented [PW19]: Isaiah 11:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

**Commented [PW23]: 1 Samuel 13:8-9 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him.

<sup>9</sup> So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering.

**Commented [PW24]: Joshua 6:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And the LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.

**Commented [PW25]: Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

**Commented [PW26]: Isaiah 40:31 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

We think way too much of our own ability. When we realize how limited we are and how great God is, we find the power in a humble submitted life that waits on the Lord. That was the source of Jesus' strength and success. Though He was God in the flesh, He did nothing without direction from the Father (John 5:30). The fruit of our lives is directly related to whether or not we wait on the Lord. What appears to be fruit is not always fruit that remains.

*<sup>24</sup> Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?<sup>25</sup> For thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children. Isaiah 49:24-25* It was the children of the original readers that would be taken captives. God was promising to set them free and rescue them. He would contend with those who contended with His own. He would save the children of the original readers. God was going to deal with this first world empire by raising up Cyrus.

God is able to rescue us, but as those men facing Babylon's furnace declared, "But if not, we will still not bow to commands that cause us to disobey God" (Daniel 3:18). We will trust God to deliver by life or by death.

*<sup>26</sup> I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your*

*Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."* Isaiah 49:26 God did deal with the Gentile nation of Babylon. He has dealt with all those who harm His children. He said that whoever touches us touches the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8). Harm a saint and you poke God in the eye.

I visited a church in a West Africa nation that had a blind man who was always at church first before others, praying for the service. One day a Muslim man took a stick and went into the church and severely beat the blind man. That day the attacker's arm that wielded the stick became like hardened cement. When the blind man heard of it, he went to visit the man and prayed for his healing. The man was healed, and since then, there have not been any more attacks on that church.

As the hearts of people grow harder in the last days, the persecution will be so severe that the Great Tribulation concluding with Armageddon will be the only just answer. After that, Christ will reign on the earth for a thousand years, the glorious kingdom Isaiah has just started to describe will cover the earth. We'll see how we were meant to be governed under Christ; but we will also see the hardness of the hearts of men.

Our passage today once again covers the past, the present, and the future. The Word never fails to speak the truth. How then should we live today?

**Commented [PW29]: Zechariah 2:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:

**Commented [PW27]: John 5:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

**Commented [PW28]: Daniel 3:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

## Questions

- 1 What is Zion?
- 2 What are we tempted to think?
- 3 How does God reassure us?
- 4 What are our walls?
- 5 How have 19 and 20 been fulfilled?
- 6 How might you experience verse 21?
- 7 How might 22 and 23a come to pass?
- 8 Why do we need to wait on the Lord?
- 9 Why don't we wait?
- 10 What happens to those who harm God's children?