

August 22

Scriptures: Read Isaiah 62, 63 & 64

Key Verse: “And they shall call them The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord...”
(Isaiah 62:12)

Overview

Whatever the Lord has promised, He will bring to fulfillment, just as He affirms in chapter 62:1. He has promised a bright, new, and righteous Jerusalem, and His plan will not fail, for He has purposed that He will not keep silent or rest until it is established (62:1). Indeed, the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives and hearts of God’s people (His “watchmen”) who are given to intercessory prayer and who fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19). The Gospel message is continually being proclaimed in all parts of the world (62:6-7). In these ways, and in lifting high the banner of the cross, the Lord’s faithful people are preparing the way for Jesus Christ’s return (62:10). At that time, the Lord will claim His pure and undefiled Bride, with whom He will rejoice (62:5; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 21:2).

The Lord comforts Jerusalem with the brightness of her future for she will be like a jeweled crown in His hand. She will no longer be forsaken by God or desolate. She will no longer be subjected to any other nation, nor will she be inhabited by the wicked; rather, she will be inhabited by the Bride of Christ, who will be called “The Holy People” and “The Redeemed of the Lord” (62:12). Like the new creation that Jesus makes in the lives of the Redeemed, so too Jerusalem will be a new creation, and as such she will receive a special and new name given to her by God. The people from other nations will also call her by new names, such as Hephzibah (“My delight is in her”), Beulah (“married”, implying “fertility”, cf. 54:5-6), and “Sought Out” (since all people will desire her and long to be her citizens). She will also be called “A City Not Forsaken”, for the King of kings will bless her and dwell within her gates (62:4, 12).

Before the New Jerusalem will be established, the Lord Jesus must come again, but this time His coming will be in the day of vengeance, as Isaiah explains in chapter 63 (cf. 61:2). For many, it is hard to picture Jesus, the merciful Servant, Saviour, and Shepherd, as a God of wrath with blood-stained garments (63:2-3; cf. Rev. 19:11-15). But at that time, the period of His longsuffering grace and restraint will be past, and the wicked who rally against Him and His people must meet with judgment. One of the reasons for God’s intervention is to save His people from the Enemy whose forces seek to destroy them (63:1). The wicked are represented by “Edom” (cf. 34:5-6), Israel’s neighbour and relative (descendants of Esau). They were proud, showed enmity and envy (Ezek. 35:5, 10-11), and were violent and oppressive to the children of Israel (Joel 3:19). The Lord recompensed them for their evil (Obad. 15-16; Amos 1:11), just as He will do in the coming day of vengeance.

Unlike Moses, the mediator of old, who had faithful co-workers to uphold his arms and thereby help him win the battle (Ex. 17:12), there was no one capable of helping the Messiah Jesus to win this battle, for just as He was victorious on Calvary alone, so too He will win this great victory alone (63:5; 59:16). In His righteous and just judgment upon the wicked, God’s people will recognize that He was showing them His tender love, great goodness, and mercy. The Lord

not only saw all the afflictions of His people, He also felt them; for He, the suffering Servant, was familiar with pain and grief and could therefore empathize with them and provide real comfort and consolation (63:9; cf. Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15). The prophet longs for this day of the Lord's special care and guidance, as it was when He led them under their shepherd Moses, but now in the time of their estrangement from God, He withheld His mercy. With repentant hearts they prayed for God to return and restore them, that they might once again be His Holy people.

Along this same train of thought, in chapter 64 Isaiah presents to the Lord the plea of the righteous remnant: that He would come and intervene with a mighty display of His power (as it was on Mount Sinai) to bring judgment on the wicked, subject all nations, and deliver His people from their oppression (cf. Ps. 144:5-8). For those who love Him, trust in Him ("wait for Him", 64:4b), and "remember" [to obey] Him, the Lord "acts" on their behalf and will "meet" them in their time of need. The Apostle Paul utilizes 64:4 to explain how God's Spirit has now enlightened and revealed to man His profound purpose, which is seen in Jesus (1 Cor. 2:9-10,16).

In a prayer of profound penitence, the prophet Isaiah and the remnant declare their own sin which makes them "unclean" (ritually defiled, like a leper; Lev. 5:2; 13:45), and even their own righteousness before the Holy and truly righteous God is like a filthy rag (64:6). The imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ given to believers, however, is glorious and beautiful in the eyes of God (cf. Phil. 3:9). They recognize that although they deserve only His wrath because of their inexcusable guilt, they, His people, are still the work of God's hands, and since He is like a merciful and loving Father, they can plead for His gracious promises and for His wrath to subside.

Prayer

Lord God, we join Isaiah in a prayer of repentance. Forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, so that we may be Your holy people. Lord, we recognize that this holiness is not of ourselves, but is only given to us through Your grace. May we conduct our lives worthy of this grace.