

Segment 13: Isaiah 60-61

Who is God speaking to in chapter 60? Not until verse 14 is the addressee of this chapter identified. He is speaking to His city, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. This chapter cannot refer to the return from exile under Zerubbabel and Joshua in 538 bc (Ezra 1-2) nor to Ezra's arrival to teach the people the Law in 457 bc (Ezra 7-8) nor to Nehemiah's coming to rebuild the wall in 445 bc (Neh 2). None of these wonderful events matches the influx of extravagant wealth and abundance pictured here. Furthermore, the ending of the chapter aligns with the description of New Jerusalem in Rev. 21. Though readers who are convinced of a heavenly hope find these chapters, they make perfect sense if one understands that they refer to the time of the Kingdom, when God elevates Zion to the position of highest prominence.

Isaiah 60:1-3

Yahweh will illuminate Zion as a beacon of light, endowing her with His own glory. The light will draw nations and kings to God's holy city, like a magnet (Isaiah 2:2; 49:6; Luke 13:29; Rev 21:24). This may be an echo of the ninth plague in Egypt when God blackened the sky for three days with a darkness so thick that it could be felt (Ex 10:21-23). However, there was light in Goshen where the children of Israel lived.

Verses 4-9

As the nations come to Zion's light, they bring with them Jerusalem's children and copious wealth. As if a destitute mother long estranged from her children and chafing under the shroud of poverty, the city of God exults with a thrill to see her sons and daughters returning along with countless riches. Some interpreters have felt uncomfortable with the focus on riches here, as if financial gain is inherently unspiritual or unworthy of God's grand vision for His people. Even so, the camels, gold, frankincense, rams, and silver all belong to God, so it is fitting that He uses them to enrich His capital city and its inhabitants. Also, some commenters spiritualize the meaning here to refer to the inclusion of the Gentiles into Christianity, but this strategy is unwarranted and unsubstantiated. We see also that God purposes much of this wealth for the glorification of His house (Hag 2:7).

Verses 10-14

Although God had punished His city for idolatry and injustice, His wrath passed by, and what was left in its wake was His enduring compassion (Is 54:8). In ancient times, cities had walls to protect them from dangerous animals and marauders. The access point was the gate. Typically the gates were open all day and closed all night (Neh 7:3; 11:19; 13:16-22). A city with permanently open gates is so convinced of its safety that it no longer feels a need for even rudimentary defense. In this case, they are left open to allow foreigners to bring in their wealth. The theme continues to focus on wealth as God makes clear that He wants His sanctuary to be beautiful and glorious. Not only

wealth but also honor will be won by God's people as their afflictors humble themselves, recognizing the authority and dominion God has given His servants.

Verses 15-17a

Jerusalem was essentially abandoned for seventy years during the Babylonian captivity. Furthermore, several times since then, it has endured horrific wars and tragedies from the revolts against the Romans to the bloody battles of the crusades. However, in the last days, no longer will it be forsaken or hated; instead God will make it "an everlasting pride." God's redeeming of His people and this city is to prove that He, Yahweh, is their Savior, Redeemer, and the Mighty One. He will upgrade every building material in the city.

Verses 17b-18

God will install peace and righteousness as rulers in the city. John Oswalt argues that the words "administrators" and "overseers" in the phrase, "I will make peace your administrators and righteousness your overseers," are negative words equivalent to "inspectors" and "slave drivers." Thus, peace is the inspector, and righteousness is the slave driver. This is an ironic statement: "If Righteousness is your 'slave driver,' and Peace is your 'inspector,' that is, if the worst is wonderful, what will the best be?"¹ Violence will not interrupt the peace of the land (Is 2:4; 11:6-9). The walls are salvation and the gates are praise, not because they save the people and are worthy of praise—we have already seen that the gates are not even closed—but because the salvation God provides will be the walls and the praise He is worthy of will be the entry point to the city (Is 26:1-4).

Verses 19-20

Once again, we return to the theme of light. Yahweh will personally illuminate the city such that it has no need of sun or moon. The connection to Revelation is unmistakable (Rev 21:10-14, 22-27).

Verses 21-22

God's people will be righteous and inherit the land (Mat 5:5) so that He may receive glory.

Isaiah 61:1-2

This is a new section, but it continues the themes of chapter 60. Whereas the focus there was on the eschatological redemption and glorification of Zion, here the focus turns to people—the speaker and those who will enjoy the benefits of the Kingdom. We begin with the messenger heralding forth the announcement of good news (gospel) to the afflicted, brokenhearted, captives, and prisoners. His message focuses on the favorable year of Yahweh and God's day of vengeance. The favorable year may relate to the ancient practice of jubilee (Lev 25:8-16). Jesus opened his famous Nazareth sermon by reading these words from Isaiah (Luke 4:16-22).

¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998), p. 556.

Verse 3

As with verse 1, verse 3 emphasizes the reversal of fortunes: from ashes to a garland, from mourning to gladness, from a spirit of fainting to a mantle of praise. God will plant the people in the land like huge oak trees. Again, the purpose is clear (like 60:21); God acts so that He may be glorified. Jesus frequently preached the theme of reversals (ex. Mat 5:3-11).

Verses 4-7

What was accomplished in Zion in chapter 60 is now accomplished throughout the land in chapter 61—reconstruction and restoration. Once again foreigners are present, but here the focus is on their service to the people of God. Why aren't God's children pasturing the flocks? They are ministering to the people and serving as priests. Once again, wealth and rejoicing intertwine naturally.

Verses 8-9

Yahweh loves justice and hates it when people fake worship to Him in order to make a buck. He assures us that He will pay back those who deserve it: good for the righteous and bad for the unrighteous. His children will enjoy international acclaim. They will be the stars of the world to come. Rather than looking up to immoral athletes and actors, the children of the millennial age will have the heroes of faith to admire. Why are these people of faith so great? God has blessed them. Thus, God gets glory even through the exaltation of His people in the eyes of the nations.

Verses 10-11

Now the speaker returns to speak about his own relationship with God. He rejoices in Yahweh and exults in his God. God has wrapped him in salvation and righteousness. However, the story doesn't end with God's Messiah – the whole world is saved as well. Righteousness and praise sprout up before all nations. What a glorious hope to hold onto (Heb 6:19)!

Segment 14: Isaiah 62:1ff; 63:1-6

Zion's glory

Isaiah 62:1

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent.

For Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet.

Jerusalem is God's chosen city. It is the place that He chose for His name to dwell. (Deut 12:5, 11,14; The three major feasts were to be celebrated here – Deut 16:2, 10-11, 16; Psalm 132:13-14; 48:1-2; II Chronicles 6:5-6).

For Zion's sake, for Jerusalem's sake, God will not keep quiet. Righteousness will return to Zion.

Isaiah 62:2

The nations will see your righteousness and all kings your glory (Isaiah 2:2-3; 18:7).

You will be called by a new name which Yahweh will designate. (Revelation 3:12).

The actual meaning of the name "Jerusalem" is uncertain but most definitions have something to do with "peace". (i.e. "teaching peace"; "foundation of peace"; "the city of peace"). Cities throughout history have been called by different names. So too, Jerusalem has and will have many names:

- The city of righteousness – Isaiah 1:26
- A faithful city – Isaiah 1:26
- The city of Yahweh – Isaiah 60:14
- The Zion of the Holy One of Israel – Isaiah 60:14
- Sought out, a city not forsaken – Isaiah 62:12
- The Throne of Yahweh – Jeremiah 3:17
- "Yahweh- tsidqenuw" - Yahweh is our righteousness – Jeremiah 33:16
- "Yahweh-shammah" - Yahweh is there. Ezekiel 48:35
- The City of Truth – Zechariah 8:3

Isaiah 62:3

You will be a "crown of beauty"; a "royal diadem" in the hand of Yahweh. Jerusalem, Zion will be God's crown to display before the nations of the world. She also will rule over all the nations of the world.

Isaiah 62:4

Azubah – "Forsaken"

Shemamah – "Desolate"

Hephzibah – "My delight is in her"

Beulah – "Married"

Soon, (586BC) the city of Jerusalem would receive the judgments pronounced by Yahweh. The city would become forsaken and desolate. However, there is a time, when the city will be

called by a new name, and Yahweh's delight will be in her. Rather than "forsaken", God's delight will be in her. And rather than "desolate", she will be married.

Isaiah 62:5

In this verse two uses of the figure of speech "simile" are used to reiterate what is emphasized in verse four:

- "As a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you". Jerusalem will not be as a desolate woman, without anyone to take care of her and possess her/rule her as a husband does a wife. (Note: the word "marry" in this verse is the word "Beulah" from verse 4).
- "As the bride groom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you." God will again be able to rejoice over his city, just as a bride groom rejoices over his new bride.

Isaiah 62:6-7

The watchmen all day and night will never keep silent, reminding Yahweh to take no rest until He makes Jerusalem praise in the earth (verse 1). Psalm 122:6-9.

Isaiah 62:8-9

God has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm. The city will again prosper.

Isaiah 62:10-12

Yahweh has proclaimed to the end of the earth "Lo, your salvation comes."

Vengeance on Edom

Isaiah 63:1-6

Bozrah is a town in Edom. The nation of Edom is the decedents of Esau – Gen 36:1. The country Jordan today encompasses the land, which in Old Testament times was Edom, Moab, and Ammon.

Edom, here is possibly symbolic of all the enemies of God. It could represent all these nations that are destined for destruction. However, God has pronounced significant judgment against Edom (Isaiah 21:11-12; Isaiah 34:2-8; Jer 49:7-22; Eze 25:12-14; Amos 1:11-12; Obadiah 1ff).

The question is asked, "Who is this that comes from Edom?" The one asking goes on to describe what this one looks like... "with garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, this one who is majestic in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength."

The first answer, "It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

Another question is asked, "Why is your apparel red, and your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?"

The second answer, "I have trodden the wine press trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with me. I also trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on my garments, and I stained all my raiment."

Verse 4-6

The day of God's vengeance was in God's heart. Since there was no man to help, God brought salvation through his own arm – his agent, the servant of Yahweh. This day of God's vengeance, when His Messiah will trample the grapes of wrath and have his clothing dipped in blood, is described in the final book. Revelation 14:14-20; 19:11-16.