

Review

We have finished up our six-part study of "Jesus in Isaiah," and now as we approach chapter 54, God turns his attention to His wife, the people of Israel.

54:1-3 You Will Spread Abroad

If you've ever been close to a couple who were unsuccessfully trying to conceive children, you probably know how devastating it is. But for a Jewish woman, this devastation was multiplied many times over. Fruitfulness of the womb was considered a blessing from God, and so barrenness was viewed as a reproach. The Jews' entire culture - their history, their identity, their property - centered on the generational line.

The wife of the Lord was childless, but her husband reassures her that she will have many children.

This is a metaphor, a figure of speech that God uses to describe that although the population of the Jews will be very small at the end of the Babylonian Captivity, God will one day bless them so radically that their population will spread out to occupy not only the cities now abandoned, but also the surrounding nations.

Now, there are times in the book of Isaiah where it's hard to tell if God is prophesying about the return from Babylon, or the Millennial Kingdom. I think before we're too far into the chapter, you'll come to the conclusion that these promises are fulfilled completely in the Millennium, when Christ returns to rule and reign on earth.

But there are also principles of God's character and way of doing things that apply to us in the here and now. For example, in Galatians chapter four, Paul used this passage to describe that the principle is true not only for literal Israel, but also for the people of the New Covenant - Christians (Gal. 4:27).

In anticipation of this blessing, God says to enlarge your tent. In other words, get prepared for the blessing as if it's a done deal. If you truly believe God's going to bless you with babies, get the baby's room ready! If you're anticipating God to come through with something really big, then get ready for it today. Enlarge your tent in anticipation - be pre-

pared for God's blessing to happen!

54:4-5 The Reproach Of Your Widowhood

In that culture, it was almost as shameful to be a widow as it was to be childless. Both were viewed as being judged by God, or having a lack of favor from Him at least.

Israel's exile to Babylon wasn't just difficult and painful because of the death and conquering that happened. It was also shameful, a publicly visible disgrace.

God continues to reassure them that they are not widowed, and will not remain childless. God is their husband and Redeemer.

And of course because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, the principle always applies: There are times when we're ashamed, humiliated, and disgraced. But God brings us into a new season where the shame is forgotten and the reproach is no longer remembered.

54:6-10 For A Brief Moment I Forsook You

God acknowledges that they were shamed because of shameful behavior. He did appear to forsake them when He sent them to Babylon. But it was as punishment, not destruction. God's covenant promises still applied, and He continued to love His people.

It was similar to the days of Noah, when God brought judgment, but not for the purpose of totally wiping out everybody. Yes, He was angry during the days of Genesis 6. But He made sure to preserve and care for Noah and his family. The waters covered the earth, but they would eventually recede. And at the end of it all, He promised He'd never flood the earth again (Gen. 9:15).

In the same way, He reassures the Jews that no matter how bad things look, He will always be merciful to them, and will always keep His promises. And the promise He's reminding them of is a peaceful promise for their future. It is the covenant that says in the Millennium, they won't even have to worry about wild animals, much less enemy nations. We read of this covenant of peace in Ezekiel 34...

Ezek. 34:25 "I will make a covenant of peace with them and

eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

Isaiah has already told us much about the Millennial Kingdom, including the fact that,

Is. 11:6-9 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

54:11-12 I Will Make Your Wall Of Precious Stones

At first reading, it sounds like God is metaphorically saying that He will restore the Jews and make them rich in blessings. But when you consider the new Jerusalem described in Revelation 21, you certainly would be justified in reading this literally as well.

Rev. 21:18-20 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, cal-SED-uh-nee; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, CHRIS-o-lite; the eighth, BEAR-L; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, KRIS-o-praise; the eleventh, JAY-sinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

54:13 All Your Sons Will Be Taught Of The Lord

During this time of blessing, He says, "all your sons will be taught of the Lord."

Today, nearly half of Israeli Jews define themselves as secular. Less

than 20% of them consider themselves Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox. But during the Millennium, not only will they believe in the Lord, but they will be taught by the Lord Himself! As we read back in chapter two,

Is. 2:2-4 Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples

The Lord will be reigning and teaching in Jerusalem, and the Jews will be with Him in the Millennium.

Jesus quoted this verse in John chapter six.

John 6:41-45 ...the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me."

So again, we have the literal fulfillment of the verse in the Millennium, but the spiritual principle at work today in that anyone who comes to Jesus is learning from the Father, being taught of God.

54:14-17 No Weapon Formed Against You Will Prosper

The spiritual principle at work here is that the enemies of the righteous are never victorious. Even if they are fiercely attacked, God will

cause them to fall and fail, either immediately or in the day of judgment.

This has been very literally promised to the Jews since the beginning. God's very first promise to Abraham was back in Genesis 12:

Gen. 12:2-3 ...I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse...

And we see all through the Scriptures for both the past and the future that any nation who oppresses or attacks Israel incurs the wrath of God.