



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

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# Outline of the Book of Isaiah

- I. Warning of Judgment on Israel (1-39)
- II. The Promise of Future Hope in the New Jerusalem (40-66)
  - A. The Announcement of Hope (40-48)
  - B. The Servant Fulfills God's Mission (49-55)
  - C. The Servants Inherit God's Kingdom (56-66)

# The Servants Inherit God's Kingdom (Isaiah 56-66)

- The last eleven chapters of the book of Isaiah form the conclusion and climax of the book's teaching.
- As such, they show us the kind of righteous living that is expected of the *true* servants of the Lord.
- There is a *chiastic* structure to chapters 56-66, of which chapters 60-62 form the centerpiece:
  - A. Obedient foreigners (56:1-8)
    - B. Necessity of ethical righteousness (56:9-59:15a)
      - C. Divine warrior (59:15b-21)
        - D. Jerusalem as the light of the world (60:1-62:12)
      - C' Divine warrior (63:1-6)
    - B' Necessity of ethical righteousness (63:7-66:17)
  - A' Obedient foreigners (66:18-24)

# The Servants Inherit God's Kingdom (Isaiah 56-66)

- The function of a chiasm is to give the midpoint special prominence.
- Thus, we find the culmination of the Servant's (and *his* servants') ministry in focus in chapters 60-62 as restored Jerusalem fulfills the promised ministry of being a light to the nations.
- But why not have the book *end* on *this* note?
- Instead the book of Isaiah ends with this happy thought:
  - *"From one month to the next and from one Sabbath to the next, all people will come to worship me," says the Lord. "They will go out and observe the corpses of those who rebelled against me, for the maggots that eat them will not die, and the fire that consumes them will not die out. All people will find the sight abhorrent."*



# The Servants Inherit God's Kingdom (Isaiah 56-66)

- One of my commentaries (John Oswalt) suggests (and I suspect he may be right) that Isaiah was unwilling to end the book with the kind of promise that would leave readers with the feeling that, because of the *certainty* of *future blessing*, their *present* behavior is unimportant.
- So, although “Jerusalem as the light of the world,” is highlighted in the *center* of the *literary* structure of this final section of the book, the *very last words* of the book of Isaiah solemnly remind his readers of the necessity of obeying God if we are to be among that worshiping crowd from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

# The Future Glory of Zion (60:1-22)

- As we have just noted, Isaiah 60-62 form the center section of the chiastic structure in which chapters 56-66 are arranged.
- These three chapters display the glorious future of a Jerusalem in which God's glory shines through his anointed Servant.
- That glory is an expression of the reality that will exist when the divine warrior's conquest of sin is complete.

# The Future Glory of Zion (60:1-22)

- But *even prior* to the *final* consummation (i.e. the eternal state), many aspects of that glory have *already* been realized in the New Covenant.
- God's light has dawned in Zion in the person of Jesus Christ.
- As a result, many of the world's great nations have "come" to Jerusalem (spiritually not spatially).
- After the Servant's conquest of sin on the cross, a remnant of the wayward people of Israel were restored to the true message of the gospel and sent forth from Jerusalem by Jesus and his apostles.
- And from Jerusalem a witness has gone out to all the world, and that witness continues to this day.

# The Future Glory of Zion (60:1-22)

- Chapter 60 may be divided into four stanzas:
  - A Light in Zion Beckons the Nations (60:1-3)
  - The Gathering of All Nations to Zion (60:4-9)
  - Submission of Nations to Zion (60:10-14)
  - Restoration of Israel to God (60:15-22).



# A Light in Zion Beckons the Nations (60:1-3)

60:1 *“Arise! Shine! For your light arrives!  
The splendor of the LORD shines on you! <sup>2</sup>  
For, look, darkness covers the earth and  
deep darkness covers the nations, but the  
LORD shines on you; his splendor appears  
over you. <sup>3</sup> Nations come to your light,  
kings to your bright light.*

# A Light in Zion Beckons the Nations (60:1-3)

- The emphasis on “*light*” in this section is all the more striking because of the **contrast** with 59:9 (“*We wait for light, but see only darkness; we wait for a bright light, but live in deep darkness.*”).
- Where there was complete “*darkness*,” there will now be “*light*” like that of the rising sun.
- There is no question as to the **source** of this light.
- It is not something that originates from Zion itself; rather, it is a reflection of the “splendor” (or glory) of the LORD – as we will see when we get to verse 19.
- Something has occurred that makes it possible for the glory of the LORD to be seen in his people.
- That “something” is the **conquest** of sin by the divine warrior that we saw last week in **Isaiah 59:15b-21**.

# A Light in Zion Beckons the Nations (60:1-3)

- As Isaiah has already stated in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, the Servant will be a “*a light to the nations*,” and here we see that Zion will be the lamp out of which that light shines on the nations (60:3).
- The purpose of God’s sharing his glory with his people becomes explicit in 60:2-3.
- Israel has a mission: The “*nations*” are in “*darkness*” because they do not know their Creator – the *only* Savior who can deliver them.
- When the “*light*” of God dawns in Israel, the nations will recognize it for what it is and “*come*” flowing to it.
- Zion’s light is *not* for *itself* but for *others*.

# The Gathering of All Nations to Zion (60:4-9)

*60:4 Look all around you! They all gather and come to you – your sons come from far away, and your daughters are escorted by guardians. <sup>5</sup> Then you will look and smile, you will be excited and your heart will swell with pride. For the riches of distant lands will belong to you, and the wealth of nations will come to you. <sup>6</sup> Camel caravans will cover your roads, young camels from Midian and Ephah. All the merchants of Sheba will come, bringing gold and incense and singing praises to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> All the sheep of Kedar will be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth will be available to you as sacrifices. They will go up on my altar acceptably, and I will bestow honor on my majestic temple. <sup>8</sup> Who are these who float along like a cloud, who fly like doves to their shelters? <sup>9</sup> Indeed, the coastlands look eagerly for me; [the ships of Tarshish] are in the lead, bringing your sons from far away, along with their silver and gold, to honor the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has bestowed honor on you.*



**60:4** *Look all around you! They all gather and come to you— your sons come from far away, and your daughters are escorted by guardians.*

- Here Isaiah repeats language used earlier in chapter 49 to describe the nations assisting Israel in their return from Babylonian exile: *“Look all around you! All of them gather to you... They will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders.”* (Isaiah 49:18a, 22b)
- However, though the same or similar words are used here, the setting has moved on, and the promise is realized in even **grander** terms than when those words were used in chapter 49.
- **Now** Zion’s citizens are assembled from **every** nation.
- There are none missing from this assembly, they *“all gather”* and they *“come from far away”*.

60:5 *Then you will look and smile, you will be excited and your heart will swell with pride. For the riches of distant lands will belong to you, and the wealth of nations will come to you.*

- “*Then*”, as Zion looks at the grand and glorious scene of her assembled children, she will be **struck** by the reality of it all.
- She will “*smile*” – her face lit up with joy at what she sees.
- She will be “*excited*” and her “*heart will swell with pride*”.
- The reason for this response is found not only in the **numbers** who have gathered, but in the fact that they have **not** come **empty-handed**.
- “*the riches of distant lands*” and “*the wealth of nations*” will be brought to her as a gesture of gratitude to Zion’s God.

**60:6** *Camel caravans will cover your roads, young camels from Midian and Ephah. All the merchants of Sheba will come, bringing gold and incense and singing praises to the LORD.*

- Here Isaiah emphasizes the **worldwide** nature of the pilgrimage of the nations, coming from **every** direction – from the far southeast (“*Sheba*”) to the distant west (“*Tarshish*” – vs. 9).
- They will come by every mode of travel known in the ancient world – from “*camels*” to “*ships*” (vs. 9).
- The **wealth** they bring will be of every sort as well: “*incense*”, “*sheep*” and “*rams*” (vs. 7), “*silver and gold*” (vs. 9).
- As these camel caravans come in such large numbers that they “*cover [Zion’s] roads*” they are all “*singing praises to the LORD.*”

**60:7** *All the sheep of Kedar will be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth will be available to you as sacrifices. They will go up on my altar acceptably, and I will bestow honor on my majestic temple.*

- “*Kedar*” and “*Nebaioth*” are both mentioned in Genesis 25:13 as children of Ishmael, and are known to have inhabited areas in the northern part of the Arabian desert.
- The wealth of both peoples was founded on their *flocks* of sheep and on the wool they provided.
- Now their animals will be offered as “*sacrifices*” to the LORD.
- Terms like “*sheep... rams... sacrifices... altar... temple*” all draw on features of the Old Testament era to paint a picture of the international worship which will be offered to the LORD in a future era.
- These details are part of the imagery used to convey the message and are *not* in any way suggesting that animal sacrifices will someday be *reinstated* in Zion.



**60:8** *Who are these who float along like a cloud, who fly like doves to their shelters?* <sup>9</sup> *Indeed, the coastlands look eagerly for me; [the ships of Tarshish] are in the lead, bringing your sons from far away, along with their silver and gold, to honor the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has bestowed honor on you.*

- The prophet then seems to look westward again, and in the distance he sees a fleet of merchant ships with sails spread, moving swiftly across the sea “*who fly like doves to their shelters*”.
- They are moving so fast because “*the coastlands*”, the distant nations, “*look eagerly*” for the solution to their spiritual needs, which can only be found in “*me*” – that is, in the LORD.
- They hear what is happening in Zion, and they make no delay in taking “*ships of Tarshish*”, the largest vessels of the day, to make the pilgrimage to Zion, “*bringing [Zion’s] sons from far away, along with their silver and gold, to honor the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has bestowed honor on you*”.

# The Gathering of All Nations to Zion (60:4-9)

- This future migration of the nations and their resources to Zion is a *poetic* description of how, after Christ's first and eventually his second coming, the *nations* will be drawn to worship and pay homage to the God of Israel.
- During the New Covenant era, as men from every nation see believers whose lives are "*filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ*" (Philipians 1:11) they will be attracted to God's provision and seek to share in it, giving him the glory.
- We see this idea reflected in New Testament passages like:
  - *Let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven.* (Mat 5:16)
  - *Maintain good conduct among the non-Christians, so that though they now malign you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God when he appears.* (1 Peter 2:12)

# Submission of Nations to Zion (60:10-14)

<sup>10</sup> *Foreigners will rebuild your walls; their kings will serve you. Even though I struck you down in my anger, I will restore my favor and have compassion on you.* <sup>11</sup> *Your gates will remain open at all times; they will not be shut during the day or at night so that the wealth of nations may be delivered, with their kings leading the way.* <sup>12</sup> *Indeed, nations or kingdoms that do not serve you will perish; such nations will definitely be destroyed.* <sup>13</sup> *The splendor of Lebanon will come to you, its evergreens, firs, and cypresses together, to beautify my palace; I will bestow honor on my throne room.* <sup>14</sup> *The children of your oppressors will come bowing to you; all who treated you with disrespect will bow down at your feet. They will call you, 'The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.'*



**60:10** *Foreigners will rebuild your walls; their kings will serve you. Even though I struck you down in my anger, I will restore my favor and have compassion on you.*

- “*Foreigners will rebuild your walls*” – What is in view here is not the rebuilding of the city walls of a *literal* Jerusalem.
- What happened in the days of Nehemiah was a mere *foreshadowing* of what would be realized in messianic times.
- This altered disposition towards Zion on the part of those from other nations will occur because of a fundamental change in attitude on the part of the **LORD** towards his chosen people.
- He doesn’t gloss over of his former “*anger*”, in which he had “*struck... down*” the city through foreign invaders, but **now** he “*will restore [his] favor*” and “*have compassion*” on her.
- Through this renewed experience of divine grace, Zion’s inhabitants will become the recipients of the goodwill of their former enemies.



**60:11** *Your gates will remain open at all times; they will not be shut during the day or at night so that the wealth of nations may be delivered, with their kings leading the way.*

- *“Your gates will remain open at all times”* – It was normal practice to close city gates at night.
- The fact that they are *“open at all times”* is a sign of ***security***.
- Compare the description given here of future Zion with the description given of the New Jerusalem in the eternal state given in the book of Revelation:
  - *And I saw the holy city– the new Jerusalem– descending out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband... The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their grandeur into it. Its gates will never be closed during the day (and there will be no night there). They will bring the grandeur and the wealth of the nations into it... (Rev 21:2, 24-26)*

**60:11** *Your gates will remain open at all times; they will not be shut during the day or at night so that the wealth of nations may be delivered, with their kings leading the way.*

- The transformed attitude of the nations towards Zion has left her without potential aggressors.
- Not only that, but the gates need to be kept open all the time “*so that the wealth of nations may be delivered*” to Jerusalem.
- Not only do **goods** arrive in the city; important **people** do too – “*with their kings leading the way*”.

**60:12** *Indeed, nations or kingdoms that do not serve you will perish; such nations will definitely be destroyed.*

- The security that will be enjoyed by Zion despite all the wealth they will accumulate is now explained in terms of the LORD's **decree** against those who have **rejected** his way and refuse to recognize the status of Zion: they "**will perish**".
- There is no future for any nation which displays unyielding opposition towards Zion (and so in effect towards Zion's God).
- Rather, "**such nations will definitely be destroyed**".
- Zion is the place where divine compassion has replaced divine wrath, and it is only as the nations relate correctly to that fact that they too will be in a position to participate in that salvation.

**60:13** *The splendor of Lebanon will come to you, its evergreens, firs, and cypresses together, to beautify my palace; I will bestow honor on my throne room.*

- It is not intended that the merchandise which flows into Zion will simply be placed at the disposal of its citizens.
- Certainly there will be a vast accumulation of wealth: “*The splendor of Lebanon*” derived from its natural fruitfulness, especially in its forests.
- The three types of trees mentioned (“*evergreens, firs, and cypresses*”) provided timber for construction and paneling in the ancient world.
- But **this** wood is to be used “*to beautify [the LORD’s] palace*” and “*bestow honor on my throne room*” – i.e. the LORD’s temple.
- The temple is not just **dedicated** to the LORD, it is graced with his special **presence** – and it is that which truly sets it apart.



**60:14** *The children of your oppressors will come bowing to you; all who treated you with disrespect will bow down at your feet. They will call you, 'The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.'*

- As they bring their gifts, “*children of [their] oppressors*” prostrate themselves on the ground before the people of God.
- This is a further example of the reversal in attitude on the part of the world towards Israel that was discussed in v. 10.
- Isaiah had told Hezekiah that some of his sons would serve the Babylonian kings (39:7).
- But here he says that one day, Babylon’s sons will come in a worshipful attitude to Jerusalem.
- Those who had persecuted Zion with both deed and word now come to her with titles of honor on their lips.
- This is the form of vengeance that the grace of God takes: It converts the most rabid enemies of the church into her ardent lovers and champions.

# Next Time

- I hope to cover the last section of chapter 60 that talks about *the Restoration of Israel to God in the Eternal State* (60:15-22)

# Class Discussion Time

- In the introduction to today's class I talked about how the book of Isaiah *ends* rather unexpectedly on an *ominous note* of warning, while the high watermark of the book – the glorious light that will shine forth from Zion in the eternal state – is highlighted only by the chiasmic structure of the last eleven chapters.
- What do you think of the commentator John Oswalt's idea that Isaiah was unwilling to end the book with the kind of promise that would leave readers with the feeling that, because of the certainty of future blessing, their present behavior is unimportant?
- Do you think that might have been a concern for Isaiah? Should it be a concern for us?

# Class Discussion Time

- Our passage today talks about how the ungodly nations of this world, when they see the joy and righteous behavior of God's people, will be drawn to worship and pay homage to the LORD themselves.
- Has the Christian church had this effect on the world? If so, how?
- Are you living your life in such a way that your life has this effect on the unbelievers who know you?