

17. His kingdom, His glory

November 23, 2014

If you've been a Christian for some time, you have probably heard the phrase, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." It actually came from the Book of Psalms, 122:6. As long as there are Satan and the human followers who do his dirty work existing on this earth, there won't be true peace in that city.

Last Tuesday, November 18th, just about everyone of you heard the news, the brutal killings of five worshippers – including three Americans – in a Jerusalem synagogue by two Palestinians wielding meat cleavers and a gun was just another instance of violence between the Israel people and Palestinians.

Either side does not know how to get along. Let me rephrase that. Actually they don't want to get along. Whatever happens in the Middle East affects the entire world. It is no wonder that many consider that this region as a ticking time bomb of the world.

Until the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ returns to this earth, there won't be a true peace in that area, though there might be temporary cease-fires. When He returns at the Second Coming of Christ, He will be back as the Judge, not as a Babe in the manger.

As we study this last portion of the Book of Isaiah, we will find the word 'glory' in one form or another at least 23 times. The timetable we will see here from chapter 60 to 66 will be the future – from the time after the rapture to the beginning of eternal life. We will have a tiny glimpse of God's kingdom in full of His glory. Let's ask the Lord to open our hearts to understand what He bestows for us from these chapters.

A. THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY

Isaiah 60:1-3 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. 2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. 3 The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.

Isaiah prophesied regarding the time after the rapture in Israel. At the moment of the rapture, all the living born-again Christians will be taken out of this earth into the heaven without experiencing death as well as the dead born again Christians' bodies will be resurrected and taken to heaven. I say that it will be the literal "Out-of-this-world" experience. But to those who have enough Bible knowledge about Jesus Christ, the rapture, and tribulation, yet didn't put their trust in the Savior and Lord Jesus, this 7 year period will become the absolute darkness because they will be left behind.

But it doesn't mean that God will not be at work. As He will work in the hearts of many Gentile people around the world, He will begin to work with Israel again and the people around the world will see the glory of God through them.

You see, the glory of the Lord used to dwell in the tabernacle while the Israelites were wandering around the wilderness for 40 years. But it departed from Israel due to their sins. The glory of God came into the temple when King Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem. In spite of all the blessings the Lord poured out to them, the

Israelites turned to the worthless idols again and again. Consequently, the glory of the Lord left Israel for almost 530 years from the time of the destruction of the temple and the Lord didn't speak to His people through His prophets for over 400 years.

When the glory of God came to Israel in the person of Jesus Christ, they nailed Him on a cross. Today, God's glory dwells in His church, the people, not church buildings. This is not the Replacement Theology, because our God will never discard His people, Israel as He promised.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The time of Babylon exile was the time of darkness for the Jews, but that was not what Isaiah was describing here. This will happen during the time of the 7 years of the Great Tribulation on earth as the Lord punishes the unbelieving nations and people for their wicked sins. At the same time Isaiah is describing the glorious light that will come to Israel when her Messiah Jesus returns to reign in Jerusalem which will happen at the end of the Tribulation.

Those who are into the Replacement Theology spiritualize this portion of the Scripture and apply it to today's church, but the description we see here in chapter 60 must be taken literally. The nations that are against Israel now will submit and help that nation to serve the Lord in the future.

B. OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE MESSIAH

Isaiah 61:1-3 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

As we read these verses, some of you were thinking about the portion of the Scripture that Jesus read in the synagogue of Nazareth, His hometown as the inauguration of His earthly ministry. But He didn't read all the way through. He stopped at the first portion of v2. He applied these verses to Himself as it says in Luke 4.

Luke 4:21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

The background of this Scripture is the "Year of Jubilee" which mentioned in Leviticus 25. During that year, all debts were canceled, all land was returned to the original owners, all the Hebrew slaves were freed, and everyone was given a fresh new beginning. It was the Lord's way to balance the ancient Israel economy so that the rich couldn't exploit the poor endlessly.

Don't you like that idea? Your credit card debts, student loans, mortgage payments... all would be canceled at the Year of Jubilee?!?! Don't get too excited. It only came every 50 years. In the meanwhile you would be slaves to someone, kinda like now.

This was Jesus' job description as the Savior of the world to set the captive free and pay our spiritual debt with His sinless life, but from the portion where it says, "And

the day of vengeance of our God" would come at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In other words, the comma that is between "L ord" and "and" was almost 2000 years. Actually, in Hebrew language, there is not even a comma.

The Hebrew word for 'Beauty' is "peer" which should be defined as "crown, head ornament". The threefold bestowal, promised in v3, expresses the same basic idea in different ways. Ashes were symbolic of deep sorrow; and the crown, oil, and garment all suggest preparations for joyous festival in Israel.

C. ASSURANCE OF ZION'S RESTORATION

Isaiah 62:4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the Lord delights in you, And your land shall be married.

Pretty much from the beginning of the establishment of the nation of Israel, she has been under attack or oppression due to their own sins and hatred by others like no other nations around the world. After the Second Coming of Christ, there won't be any more war against Israel. The Lord will take care of any potential threat against her.

God is speaking to Israel as 'you' here. He declares that Israel will no longer be called 'Forsaken' because of her sins, but after the restoration, she will take her new name and be called 'Hephzibah' of which definition "my delight is in her" as in this verse. Another old name 'desolate' will be replaced by "'Beulah' which means "married".

When a bride marries, she receives a new name. In the case of Israel, she was already married to Jehovah God, but she continuously remained unfaithful to the Lord with her idolatry until she will realize who the L ord truly is in the middle of the Great Tribulation which is known as the "Abomination of Desolation" when the antichrist will demand the Jewish people to worship him in the newly built temple. The Lord will restore Israel as His bride and give her these beautiful names.

This restoration also applies to us. When we sin against the L ord, our sins separate us from Him and, of course, satan and his demons gladly remind us of our sins and unworthiness to the Lord. But the Lord still loves us and wants to forgive us if we only repent and come back to Him. Trust me on this, the Lord knew exactly what He was getting when He originally saved us from our path to the eternal death. Our L ord sees us complete in Christ, without spot or blemish if we are born again Christians. He delights in us and rejoices over us. Don't forget it.

D. THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD

Isaiah 63:2-6 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? 3 "I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes. 4 For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come. 5 I looked, but there was no one to help, And I wondered That there was no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me. 6 I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."

As I read this portion of the Scripture, I couldn't help myself from thinking of a sermon by an 18th century American preacher Jonathan Edwards that was titled

“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Jonathan Edwards was interrupted many times before finishing the sermon by people moaning and crying out, “What shall I do to be saved?” Edwards’ sermon continues to be the leading example of a Great Awakening sermon.

What the Lord said here coincides with Revelation chapter 19:

Revelation 19:13-15 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Many unbelievers and even believers think that the God of NT is the God of love and does not punish sinners. Newsflash, the same God of love is the God of righteousness and holiness. He cannot and will not ignore and wink at the sins of humans. Anyone who have ignored His invitation that is recorded in this Book, the Bible will face God’s wrath. If that is you, you will be a sinner in the hands of an angry God and it is your choice as to what happen, not God’s.

E. OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS = FILTHY RAGS

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf , and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

As a former South Korean army soldier and a Sheriff’s Department chaplain, I’ve seen and been in some really, really filthy places. Now, imagine the filthiest things with total stench you can possibly think. Then, put them all in a gigantic cloth. And think about looking at it. That’s how our God sees our righteousness in comparison with His perfect holiness and righteousness.

There are two groups of self-righteous people: First, the people who think that they are good enough because they haven’t committed any crimes that they got caught with. Second, the religious people who have a form of godliness but denying its power and not submissive to the Lord and to others. They don’t realize that their righteousness is as equal as the worst sinner of mankind in the eyes of God, if not worse.

F. GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYER WHILE WE ARE STILL SPEAKING

Isaiah 65:24 “It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear.

God answers our prayers, PERIOD. Every one of them. His answers are “Yes” which we love; “No” which we don’t like, but can cope with; but there is “Wait” which we hate. We don’t think about it in this way, but it is so true. Listen, way, way before we call out in prayer to the Lord, He knew about it and already formed His answer for us before the creation of the universe because of His omniscient knowledge. In case you think that God doesn’t answer your prayers, He does unless you are in willful sin.

We get all bent out of shape because He doesn’t answer our prayers the way we want and as quickly as we want. When we have that attitude, our spiritual age is about like a mean two year old. Why two year old? Have you ever tried to reason with a two year old toddler? Either his way or no other way . This pretty much sums up our spiritual maturity when we don’t like His answer of “Wait”. How many of you have been there? Hopefully, the Lord willing, we will grow out of it soon.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Don't believe in the Replacement Theology. God promised throughout the Bible that He will never forsake Israel.

Jeremiah 31:35-37 Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): 36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the Lord, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."

2) Don't think that the God of love will not punish our sin. He also is the God of righteousness and holiness.

3) Don't think that our religious rituals would earn enough points from God to get by with our sins. Our God despises empty religion, but loves our intimate relationship with Him as His children.