

3. What is the "milk of nations"?
4. Which Zion would experience the cessation of violence?
5. Are verses 19-20 speaking literally or figuratively?
6. What are the two aspects of righteousness the people of Zion shall have?
7. What was the time Jehovah chose to create New Zion?

B. REJOICING OF ZION, CHAPTER 61

1. FREEDOM

TEXT: 61:1-4

- 1 The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;
- 2 to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;
- 3 to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland 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 Jehovah, that he may be glorified.
- 4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

QUERIES

- a. Who is "me" in verse one?
- b. What is the "year of Jehovah's favor"?
- c. How shall the "desolations of many generations" be rebuilt?

PARAPHRASE

The Servant says, The Sovereign God will send Me in all the fulness of His Sovereign Spirit because His mission for Me is to deliver the message of the good news of redemption. The Spirit of God upon Me will be the sign that I come with His authority. My mission is to heal men who have been broken in heart and spirit by sin, to declare liberation for all those who have been made prisoners of sin and to announce that the time Jehovah has set in His schedule to be gracious and conciliatory toward sinful man has arrived. Yes, I am to be sent to comfort and strengthen all who are mourning in Zion for spiritual help. I am going to give them a crown of beauty in exchange for the ashes of affliction they have had to suffer, anointing of My Spirit for joy in exchange for their mourning; I am going to wrap them in divine praise and take away their heaviness of heart. I am going to do this so that My New Zion may be established and stabilized like firmly rooted trees. After I have done this no winds or storms of affliction shall uproot them. The ancient house of Israel which for hundreds and hundreds of years has been in ruin and disarray will be rebuilt by these people whom I will liberate from the prison-house of sin.

COMMENTS

v. 1-2 MESSAGE: The "me" of verse one can be none other than the Servant of Jehovah, the Messiah. We have divine sanction for that verified by the Servant Himself in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk. 4:21). Jesus read these verses from the scroll of Isaiah and applied them directly to His own incarnate ministry by saying, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your ears." The Greek *peplerotai* is perfect tense for *has been fulfilled* and would read more literally, *has been and is continuing to be fulfilled*. From the moment Jesus was born until the Christian dispensation shall close and the gospel cease

to be preached, what Isaiah wrote in these verses is being fulfilled. And the Servant is the source of it all. The Hebrew reads, *ruach adonay yehoih*, or literally, *spirit of Lord Jehovah*. *Adonay* is the Hebrew word which suggests Judge or Master. It is like *kurios* in Greek. *Yehoih* is translated *Jehovah* and suggests Covenant-Revealer. This combination of divine character was the *ruach* (Spirit) which was upon Jesus. God gave His Spirit to Jesus without measure (Jn. 3:34). The reason Jesus needed this full anointing of the Godhead was His mission to a world of rebel prisoners enslaved by a supernatural devil. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38) so that in Jesus dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 1:19; 2:9). To anoint (the Hebrew word *mashah* is anoint and is the word from which we get Messiah) meant to crown as king—to give authority. Jesus' authority to proclaim "good tidings from heaven" was demonstrated by the miracles and signs confirming His deity. He demonstrated He had authority on earth to forgive sins by making the lame to walk and giving sight to the blind and raising the dead.

The Hebrew word for *meek* is *'anah* and means *afflicted, oppressed, ravished, miserable, poor*. This is an excellent word to describe those who know they are in need of help. It indicates the kind of person who would be glad to hear good news from God. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who were "poor in spirit" (Mt. 5:3-12). *Brokenhearted* is from the Hebrew *shavar* meaning *fractured, distressed, sorrowing*. This is why the Servant is sent to those who are mourning—sin has fractured their lives—they are disintegrating. Jesus was sent to bring them wholeness and to "bind them up."

The Servant came to announce *liberty* to the captives and release to those who were *bound*. The Hebrew word for *liberty* is *deror* and was used in connection with the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10; Ezek. 46:17, etc.) when bond-slaves were set free and land taken in payment for debts was returned to its original owners. The Mosaic "Year of Jubilee" was evidently intended to typify the messianic time. Christ came to "bind" our jailor (the devil) and free us (Mt. 12:25-30; Heb. 2:14-15;

I Jn. 3:8-9; Rev. 20:1-6). We have allowed Satan, by choosing sin, to imprison us in falsehood, lawlessness, fear and selfishness. The Servant of God sets us free from that prison (see Special Study on "Liberty Is Not License"). The Hebrew word for Jubilee is *yovil*, from *yaval*, which means, *protracted sound of the trumpet*, signifying that a very important, "once-in-a-lifetime" announcement is about to be made.

Of course, most of the Jews expected Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-30) to interpret this physically. That was the traditional interpretation of the rabbis (see comments on Isa. 53). When Jesus talked of "food" they wanted bread and fish; when He talked of "wholeness" they wanted limbs restored; when He talked of "freedom" they wanted foreign rulers driven from their land. But circumstances are not what constitute the Kingdom of God—it is character, (Rom. 14:17).

Hebrew *qara* means *proclaim, call out, shout, cry, summon*. The Servant became The Prophet, The Apostle. He was sent not only to live a godly life and to do miraculous things; He was sent to *preach* and *teach* the will of God for every other individual in the world. That was really His fundamental mission—accomplishing atonement and preaching the gospel. His miracles were simply means to that end. The Hebrew word *ratzah* is translated *favor* (or *acceptable*) and means *delightful, pleasurable, gracious*. The Servant came to announce the precise time God chose in His divine schedule of redemption to accomplish His grace toward man. In the *fulness* of time God sent forth His Son . . . (Gal. 4:4). The Servant of the Lord was anointed to "summon" all men to the "year" (or appointed time) of the Lord's pleasure or conciliation. And the day of *vengeance* was part of the Servant's announcement. All through the O.T. prophets, in highly figurative language, God promises (in the "last days" of the O.T. dispensation) He is going to defeat His foes in one great battle (Joel 2:30—3:21; Ezek. 38:1—39:29; Zech. 9:9—10:12; 12:1-14; 14:1-21; etc.), and give His people victory. That great battle was at *Calvary* and the great victory over Satan was there and at the *empty tomb*. The principalities and powers were "triumphed

over publicly and shamed" at the cross (Col. 2:15); when He ascended on high He led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8). Of course, the final and consummate vengeance of God will come at the end of this "year" of grace (end of the Christian dispensation, which are the *last days*, or end of all ages, I Cor. 10:11). But this "year" is the only "year" God has sent His Servant to announce. Now is the *acceptable* time . . . *Today* is the day of salvation! (cf. II Cor. 6:1-2). The defeat of God's enemies and His victory is the source of *comfort* for Zion. The Hebrew word *nakhham* (translated *comfort*) is very appropriate here for it means *consoled, eased, freed*.

v. 3-4 MISSION: The Hebrew word *phe'er*, translated *garland*, means more precisely, *an ornamental headdress, or adorning tiara*. The Servant-Messiah accomplishes more than conquest—He brings coronation to His people (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). He makes it possible for believers to "sit with Him in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6). His followers are crowned and reign with Him over death and all other circumstances. (cf. I Cor. 5:9-13; Heb. 11:7; I Cor. 3:21-22; Rev. 5:10). The Servant anoints His followers with "the oil of gladness" by the anointing of the Holy Spirit (cf. II Cor. 1:21; I Jn. 2:26-27) which is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and the "down payment" on the believer's future inheritance (cf. Eph. 1:14). The *ma'eteh* is from the root *'ataph* meaning *to cover for protection, or, cloak, veil*. A man may, so to speak, wrap himself in his human moods as a defense mechanism. Human moods and emotions are no protection; they are capricious, vulnerable to circumstances and temporal. Instead of human moods which are so manipulative and conducive to despair, the Servant will wrap His followers in a protective cloak of praise. If our lives are wrapped in praise to Jehovah we are protected from the manipulative capriciousness of human emotions which are so subject to circumstances. The object of our heart's desires and hopes is The Almighty, Never Varying, Always Faithful God and so we do not ever need to despair (cf. II Cor. 1:8-11). The Servant will dress His people up richly like the father dressed the prodigal son when he

returned home (cf. Lk. 15:22-24). All the despair and heaviness will be forgotten when the Messiah brings God's sons home! The Messiah will give His followers beauty (righteousness) and stability (trees, planting of Jehovah) (cf. Psa. 1:1-3). The messianic people are going to be established as God's people and nothing can "snatch them out of the Shepherd's hand" (cf. Jn. 10:27-28). No human, no spiritual power, no circumstance can take away their beauty. All this, of course, brings glory to the one so clothed, but ultimately to the One doing the dressing. The real glory went to the father of the prodigal because he exhibited such mercy, love and forgiveness.

The Servant's followers will build up the ancient ruins. The house (tabernacle, dynasty, family) of David was in ruins. David's house was the house of messianic destiny. David's throne was the throne reserved for the Messiah. But those who were sitting on David's throne in the days of the prophets scorned and usurped its messianic destiny. They violently rebelled against God's purposes for this throne of David and had brought it to shame and ruin. Amos predicted that the house of David (tabernacle of David) would be rebuilt (Amos 9:11-12). Amos' prophecy was fulfilled when the Gentiles were brought into the messianic kingdom (the church) (cf. Acts 15:12-21). We have already commented on this "rebuilding" (cf. Isa. 59:10, etc.). The church is built as a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22); Christians are living stones built into a spiritual house (I Pet. 2:4-8).

QUIZ

1. What proof do we have that this is a messianic prophecy?
2. What character is suggested in the "Spirit" by which the Servant is anointed?
3. Who are the "meek"?
4. What kind of liberty will the Messiah bring?
5. What is the "garment of praise"?
6. How will the Messiah's followers rebuild the ruins of generations?

2. FORTUNE

TEXT: 61:5-7

- 5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners shall be your plowman and your vinedressers.
- 6 But ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah; men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.
- 7 Instead of your shame ye shall have double; and instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be unto them.

QUERIES

- a. Why emphasize so much the subjugation of "foreigners"?
- b. Why promise that New Zion's citizens would be priests?

PARAPHRASE

Amazing but true, many of those who are now your enemies, alienated against you, will, in the days of the messianic Jubilee, become subjects of the New Kingdom of Zion and join with you in service to Jehovah. All of you together will be anointed as priests and ministers of Jehovah. Those former enemies who become members of New Zion will be the most precious thing their nations have and they will aid in the ongoing of Zion and their coming will bring fame and honor and blessing to you. The fact that Jehovah will conquer and make citizens of Zion of those who once opposed and mocked Him will replace whatever shame you once knew with twice as much glory and honor and blessing. And Zion will be glad and happy forever because of this.

COMMENTS

v. 5-6 JOINING: The Hebrew word *zarim* is translated *strangers* and means, *loathed-ones, barbarians, enemies, excluded-ones*. *Ben-nekar* is Hebrew for *sons of the alien* or *sons of the foreigner*. When the Messiah-Servant came crying aloud the time of the messianic Jubilee (the time of the Lord's pleasure), those who had been excluded, alienated from covenant relationship to Jehovah were to be given an invitation to join the chosen people in serving and ministering to Him. Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth apparently closed the scroll of Isaiah before He read beyond verses one and two of this chapter. He did not read the verses now under consideration, but He implied them in His reference to the mercy shown by Jehovah to two Gentiles (Lk. 4:23-27) in the remainder of His sermon!

Paul's statement to the Gentiles in Ephesians 2:11-22 is certainly the fulfillment of this. Isaiah is replete with predictions that the nations (*goiym*) will be included in the messianic age as God's people (Isa. 2:1-4; 19:23-25; 25:6-12; 56:6-8; 60:10-14, etc.).

The Jewish Apocrypha (non-canonical writings) however, reflect the humanistic, materialistic interpretations of such prophecies as those of Isaiah here concerning God's purposes for the Gentiles in the messianic age. These apocryphal writings show a *liberal* attitude of the Jewish mind toward the Gentiles during a time of relative freedom and peace for the Jews in the days of the Maccabees, but an intensifying *bitterness* and *hatred* for the Gentiles as the oppression of Rome increased until the days of Jesus and the hotheaded *Zealots* and *Sicarii* eventually stirred up the rebellion and insurrection that brought about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation in 70 A.D.

According to I Enoch 10:21, (written about 164 B.C.), all the Gentiles will become righteous and offer to God their adoration and worship. In the Sibylline Oracles III (written about 150 B.C.), the Gentiles will make their way in procession

to God's Temple there to ponder his law and supplicate the Eternal King (716ff; 725ff); from every land the Gentiles will bring frankincense and gifts to the house of the great God and in the coming messianic kingdom they will have a share in the blessings that it brings. However, in II Baruch (written after 90 A.D.), it is written: "My Messiah . . . will both summon all the nations, and some of them he will spare and some of them he will slay. These things therefore will come upon the nations which are to be spared by him. Every nation which knows not Israel, and has not trodden down the seed of Jacob, shall indeed be spared. And this because some out of every nation will be subject to thy people. But all those who have ruled over you, or have known you, shall be given up to the sword (II Baruch 72:2-6)."

But the bitterness of the Jews toward the Gentiles finds its fullest expression in Similitudes of Enoch and II Esdras (both written in the first century A.D.). They teach that all Gentiles who dwell upon the earth, at the time of the messianic age, will bring to the Elect One gifts and presents and tokens of homage; but these will be of no avail; they will be destroyed and banished from the face of the earth and will perish forever and ever. D. S. Russell says in *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, pub. Westminster, pg. 303, "The bitterness . . . expressed by the writer of II Esdras against the Gentiles is to be understood against the background of persecution which the Jewish nation as a whole had to suffer, first in the time of the Seleucids and then in the time of the Romans. It reflects the troubled years following the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and is in keeping with the trend in Judaism generally. From this time forward, and especially from the close of the first century A.D., the harsher view prevailed and the universalism of the earlier years was gradually replaced by that spirit which could be satisfied only with the annihilation of all the other nations of the earth."

In the light of these apocryphal views, which were undoubtedly the views of the majority of the Jews in Jesus' day, we may well understand the extreme animosity generated

toward Jesus when He interpreted chapter 61 of Isaiah to mean the Gentiles were to be accepted and blessed in the messianic kingdom! The traditional interpretation the people of the synagogue in Nazareth expected to hear was that the Gentiles would at least become literally the conquered slaves of the Jews. That Saturday crowd expected to hear Isaiah 61 interpreted to mean God's people would someday kill most of the Gentiles and those not killed would become slave laborers (like the ancestors of the Jews had been in Egypt) and put to work building a rich, prosperous Jerusalem and Palestine which would become the capital city of the world.

What God meant in Isaiah 61 was, of course, just the opposite of the common Jewish concept. Many of the Jews learned this with great difficulty but rejoiced once it became apparent that it was the will of Jehovah (cf. Acts 9:1-16; 10:34-43; 11:18; 13:44-52; 15:12-21; Gal. 2:11ff, etc.).

The Hebrew word for *priests*, is *kohenyim* from the root word *kahan*, meaning, *to stand, to prepare, make ready, adjust*—thus to *officiate* as one who readies or adjusts something. The word translated *ministers*, is *sharethey* and means, *to wait upon, to serve, to attend*; it is applied only to the Levites in the O.T. Law. The concept that *all Jews*, (let alone a kingdom of Jews and Gentiles) would become priests and ministers to Jehovah was revolutionary! It is essentially a prediction that the Law of Moses will be abrogated in the messianic age! Only those of Levi could be priests and ministers according to the Mosaic covenant. It took the major portion of the book of Hebrews in the N.T. to convince Jewish Christians of the first century that Jesus (from the tribe of Judah) could be a priest (after the order of Melchizedek). *All of Messiah's people are priests—even Gentiles* (cf. I Pet. 2:4-5; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Access, intercession, offering will be the vocation of *all members of the New Zion* (Heb. 10:19-25; 13:15-16; Rom. 12:1-2).

The Hebrew *heyl goiym* could be translated *host* or *army of the Gentiles*. The wealth or riches of any nation is not its gold or diamonds, but its *people*. It is the character of the

people that make any kindgom what it is. God predicts through His prophets that the future "Israel" (N.T. church, Gal. 6:16) will "feed on" the best of all nations (cf. Obadiah 17, 21; Micah 7:11-17; Zech 14:16-21; Isa. 19:16-25; 60:10-18; 66:12-21). Many of those who came into the N.T. church were not what most nations would consider their best (I Cor. 1:26-31), but they were people who could repent and be made into the image of Christ and were really the jewels of creation (cf. Phil. 4:1; I Thess. 2:19-20).

v. 7 JOY: The Hebrew word *bashettekem* is from the root *bash* which means, *disappointment, confusion, ingnominy, disgrace*. When the Jews were sinning the prophets called on the pagan nations to look at them and see if there had ever been a nation on earth so disgraceful (cf. Jer. 2:10-12; 18:13; 23:14, etc.). The nations of the Gentiles could not "hold a candle" to the Jews of the days of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel! The Gentiles mocked, derided and held in contempt everything Jewish. When they were taken into captivity the Assyrians and Babylonians hissed at them for they had claimed to be invincible because Jehovah was with them. The Jews suffered much indignity and reproach living in "unclean" heathen lands as prisoners. But Isaiah predicts a time (when the Messiah comes) when all these indignities shall be turned into exaltation and joy. The Messiah will take away all "uncleanness" and "disgracefulness." Of course, it would *not* be relief from national, cultural shame, but spiritual disgrace and spiritual uncleanness would be taken away. One is reminded of the glorious predictions of the messianic relief made by the father of John the Baptist (by the direction of the Holy Spirit) when he (Zechariah) spoke of the mission of his own son, the way-preparer (Lk. 1:67-79). Everlasting joy is a promise to be fulfilled only in the Messiah's kingdom (cf. Isa. 35:10; 51:11; Jn. 15:11; 16:22, 24; 17:13; Rom. 14:17; 15:13; Gal. 5:22; I Jn. 1:4, etc.).

QUIZ

1. What would have been the common interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-7 in Jesus' day?
2. Why is calling citizens of New Zion priests so revolutionary?
3. What will the everlasting joy of Zion have as its object of gladness?

3. FAME

TEXT: 61:8-11

- 8 For I, Jehovah, love justice, I hate robbery with iniquity; and I will give them their recompense in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
- 9 And their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed.
- 10 I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.
- 11 For as the earth bringeth forth its bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

QUERIES

- a. What is the "truth" in which Jehovah will recompense?
- b. Whose "seed" shall be known among the nations?
- c. Why use the illustration of a "bridegroom" and "bride"?

PARAPHRASE

I am Absolute, I am Faithful-Yaweh; and so justice is My very nature. I despise injustice and wickedness and so I will faithfully reward My people by delivering them from their wicked oppressors and My pledge of this shall be in an everlasting covenant which I will establish with them. The citizens of New Zion shall be uniquely recognizable and even famous wherever they are all over the world. It will be so simple to identify the godly that everyone who sees them will recognize and acknowledge that Almighty God has blessed them. Zion will be filled with joy and she shall continually offer happy praise to God for His goodness. God has wrapped Zion in the grace of His righteousness and salvation and made her as beautiful and admirable as a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride wearing her precious jewelry. Just as surely as the earth produces fruit when seeds are sown in it, so the fruits of righteousness and praise will sprout from the "seed" of New Zion sown by Jehovah among the nations.

COMMENTS

v. 8-9 **RENOUN:** Zion will one day rejoice because she shall be made famous. The reason she shall be made famous, however, will not be due to her own merit but because God is who He is: He is by nature absolutely just and faithful. God will deliver Zion from her enemies because He loves justice and hates iniquity and therefore must vindicate His absolute sovereignty by destroying iniquity and rewarding loyalty. The loyalty Jehovah will reward will be that of the sinless Servant; but the Servant will impute His perfect meritorious obedience (Heb. 10:5-10) to all who by faith and covenant-keeping become citizens of the New Zion. The Lord's primary goal is the vindication of His Name (cf. Ezek. 29:9, 14, 22, 44; 36:21, 22, 23, 32; 38:16, 23; 39:7, 8, 25-29). It is imperative that Jehovah's absolute sovereignty and absolute faithfulness be

proven and vindicated. Man's salvation depends on God's faithfulness, not his own (see comments, Isa. 48:9-11).

The word *'emeth* is translated *truth* and is from the Hebrew root *'aman* (same as Greek and English *amen*). The word means *firmness, faithfulness, stability, fidelity, verity*. The idea in verse eight is that God is going to prove His fidelity by keeping His promise to destroy Zion's enemies because they are wicked. This demonstration of Jehovah's absolute faithfulness will, in turn, move men of all nations to happily come into covenant relationship with Jehovah. All this will be accomplished when Jehovah makes an *everlasting covenant* with man. Thus once again we conclude these scriptures are prophetic of the New Zion, the church. It was at the cross and the empty tomb that God destroyed the power of all the enemies of man (cf. Lk. 1:67-79; 2:29-35; Jn. 12:27-33; 16:11; Rom. 8:31-39; Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14-15, etc.).

The Hebrew word *berith* is the word for *covenant*. It is from the Hebrew root word *barah* which means literally *to cut*, or *to choose, to select*. Its fundamental idea is "chosen" "separated" or that which distinguishes a "selected" people. God's salvation and blessings are available always *within a covenant*. A covenant, by its very nature, demands choice, or selection, and that requires conditions and terms. The everlasting covenant (or "new" covenant Jer. 31:31ff) has conditions and terms men must choose if they wish its blessings. Christ is the *new covenant* (cf. Mt. 26:26-29; Heb. 8:6; 12:24; 13:20). He is the resurrection and the life, whoever *lives* and *believes* in Him shall never die (Jn. 11:26). Paul, the apostle, spoke of the new covenant relationship as "being *in Christ*" (cf. Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 15:22; II Cor. 1:21; 3:14; 5:17; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 3:6; etc.). The everlasting covenant is predicted in many places in the O.T. (cf. Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 16:60-63; 37:26, etc.).

The "seed" and "offspring" of New Zion will be renowned among the Gentiles. The people of the Messiah (Christians) were known throughout the Roman world of the first century (and ever after) for their faith, obedience and love (cf. Acts

2:47; 4:13, 33; Rom. 16:19; I Thess. 1:8-10; Philemon 4-7; I Pet. 4:4). Pliny the younger wrote "the believers met regularly early in the morning to worship Christ as a divinity. They insisted on a strict code of ethics; to abstain from fraud, theft, and adultery, never to lie, nor to default on an obligation. At the end of the assembly they ate a common meal and then adjourned." John Noble (prisoner of the Russians for 12 years) received the admiration and respect of the Russian prison guards for his Christian life. Isaiah means to stress how different the people of the Messiah will be from the heathenish behavior of the Israel of his day or the paganism of the world in general (cf. Jn. 13:35). The goodness and blessedness and joy of the lives of the citizens of Zion will be acknowledged (perhaps even grudgingly respected) by the whole world. The Messiah's people are "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3).

In verse ten, New Zion is rejoicing in the Lord because the Lord has clothed her in salvation and righteousness. The church is all dressed up like someone waiting for a wedding! (cf. Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:6-10). The people of the Messiah partake of the glory of the Messiah by being made partakers of His nature (II Pet. 1:3-4) which is done by abiding in His Will (Jn. 15:1-11). New Zion partakes of her King's nature gradually, progressively, "from one degree of glory to another" (II Cor. 3:17-18). New Zion must never forget that her beauty is relative to and dependent upon partaking of her Lord's righteousness and salvation. New Zion has no beauty of her own. She is clothed by Someone else! So all her boasting or rejoicing is directed to the Source of her glory (cf. I Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14-16).

As surely as the earth produces when seeds are sown in it, so the Lord will produce righteousness and praise to spring forth all over the world. Isaiah affirms the faithfulness of Jehovah to keep His word. God's word always produces—it always comes to pass! (Isa. 55:10-11). The existence of God and His faithfulness has been demonstrated in thousands of supernatural, historically-eyewitnessed events. Many of these

events were predicted hundreds of years before they occurred. But most finally and ultimately God has proved His absolute veracity and trustworthiness in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Death, the ultimate enigma, the ultimate obstacle, has been defeated. It has been swallowed up forever (Isa. 25:8). He kept His word! In spite of dungeon, fire and sword, God saved a remnant of Judah and brought the Messiah into the world. Babylon could not stop His word from being fulfilled; Persia, Greece, Rome—they could not stop it! Not even the death of the Messiah upon a Roman cross could stop His word.

Now the Lord works slowly, estimated by our finite, limited experience. But He works certainly! Some, in fact a majority of men, may scoff (II Pet. 3:1-10), but one day this victorious, living Messiah is coming back for His dressed-up bride. What righteousness and praise that will call forth from New Zion (the bride) whose citizens are from every tribe and tongue and people on the face of the earth. Every knee *will* bow and every tongue *will* confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

QUIZ

1. What does the nature of God have to do with our salvation?
2. What is a covenant?
3. What is man's relationship to God's covenant?
4. Has verse nine been fulfilled?
5. What is the source of Zion's beauty?
6. How do we know God's word is sure?