

## Isaiah 60 and 62 – The Glory of Zion Notes

This last Bible study on Isaiah focuses on the hope and glory of Zion. In Isaiah 40 we saw our reasons for hope in who God is, in the coming of His Servant to redeem us in the Servant Songs. Now we focus on the hope awaiting Zion – how God’s people will display His glory and be a beacon to the nations as they were originally supposed to be. Now however it’s not through obedience to the law but through the righteousness we have in Christ – the Servant/Anointed One.

Isaiah 60-62.12 describes blessings that transcend the old order (the old covenant, the law) and even, in places, the Christian era itself. The return of the scattered Israelites here is a picture of the world-wide inflow of converts into the church, and this vision repeatedly looks beyond that to the end, the state of ultimate glory (See Revelation 21.23, 22.5) So Isaiah is foreseeing both the present Zion (Hebrews 12.22) and the coming Zion of Revelation 21.9-25)

Isaiah 61 describes the liberation that God’s Anointed One will bring and is in fact the passage that Jesus quotes in Luke 4 and declares that He is the fulfillment of – i.e. Jesus is God’s Anointed One that these chapters describe. He brings a message of liberation and restoration – not just physically (as he doesn’t bring release for John the Baptist in Luke 7) but holistically. Much echoes the earlier Servant Songs

**Isaiah 60** -a prophecy about the glory of Jerusalem, glorious because God’s light will shine upon it.

### **60.1-16 A New Dawn of Glory**

Throughout the OT the names Jerusalem or Zion frequently mean the ‘body of citizens of Jerusalem’, the whole of Judah, the whole of Israel and the entire people of God. In these chapters Jerusalem or Zion is perhaps better translated ‘the Jerusalem above’ which Revelation 21 and Galatians 4.26 take to be the ‘new Jerusalem’ i.e. the dwelling place of God, where his people – the church of Jesus will one day join him – where He is acknowledged and reigns. For Isaiah’s generation the hope is incredible that Jerusalem wouldn’t be desolate but that one day would exceed its former glory, and be a light to the nations (3-4), and Isaiah uses vivid and powerful poetry to illustrate this. The language and imagery is echoed in John’s gospel as Jesus, the light of the world and fulfilment comes. 4-5 uses strong motherly imagery of children coming home, before we see the nations flocking (bringing tributes- compare with Matthew 2) over land (6-7) and sea (8-9), being accepted and finding fulfilment in God.

### **10-16 The Promise of Victory**

God promises the triumph of his kingdom in which the nations will come to serve in the place of security where God dwells. There will be complete role reversal from those who seek to enjoy the privileges and joys of Zion.

### **17-22 The Full Blaze of Glory**

These verses are echoed in Revelation in description of heaven. Zion is transformed materially, socially (17) and spiritually (18). There will be an end to violence and destruction, salvation and praise will be the protection of the city ruled by peace and righteousness (NIV – well-being). Then follows the picture of the new creation, with God’s presence the only light that is needed. Sorrow (20), sin (21) and failure (21) will be finally defeated. God’s people are made righteous and their future, once uncertain is now secure (21). God’s splendour will be fully revealed in His people finally attaining what they were intended for – as He makes them beautiful, in His likeness.

### Isaiah 61.10 – 62.12 A Wedding Invitation

The first few verses are a continuation of the Anointed One's words in 61.10-11. His commitment and joy in the LORD is matched by his commitment to Zion, to God's people. This section is parallel by 62.6-7 and suggests a ministry of intercession. The righteousness (translated vindication in NIV) is that provided by the Servant in 53.11. Throughout are images and contrasts of marriage, the bride (Zion) will have a new name, and a new beauty of splendour, royalty and glory. Zion (God's people) clothed in His righteousness will be a visible sign to the nations that God is King.

The transformation the Anointed One achieves in His people is dramatic in 4-5, with imagery of a wedding and honeymoon (rejoicing in bride) which is echoed in the marriage feast of the Lamb in Revelation 19.

The Anointed One has played his part; God's people also have a role to play in displaying God's glory in verses 6-12. Those who 'call on the LORD' display the Anointed One's commitment to God's people and their prayers are part of His purpose and plan. It is hard to understand but within God's sovereignty our prayers that He fulfils what He has promised in these passages play a vital role in the fulfilment of His purposes for His people, and in a sense He gives us that passion.

Verses 8-12 finish by confirming all that was promised in 61.10-62.7, but within that there is a call to action on the part of God's people – God's love calls for the response of our love. 8-9 describe the security, joy and intimacy in His presence. God calls us to summon the nations (10 –perhaps we see echoes of this in Palm Sunday) to proclaim the salvation on offer and the coming/return of the Anointed One (11). The passage climaxes with the new names promised in verse 2 – names in the bible usually refer to the character of those who bear them – these names describe what we are and will be as God's people. This is what He has promised and will do.

### The Bible Study

Isaiah (and all the prophetic books of the bible) is full of rich imagery and symbolism, hence the suggestion of using the candle. It is important to be creative in communicating and hearing God's word and it can be helpful to involve other senses apart from our hearing.

The first few questions are aimed at getting people wrestling with what these passages say and seeking to understand them without using comprehension like questions. As a leader you don't know everything and there may be things you'll need to go away and look up or ask others about. Do remember that there is a lot of imagery which isn't necessarily to be interpreted as you would for example as some of Paul's epistles. Also remember to put yourself in the place of the people at the time and understand what this meant for them **before** thinking through what it means for us now.

These are incredible passages full of god's promises of what He is going to do. That's why we decided to take time to go through and remind ourselves of them, and also to take time to pray them, confident and in faith that God will bring them about in His time. There will be things we struggle with, so take time to work and pray through those slowly. The question of our part and God's part in praying these promises into being may come up – there isn't an easy answer!

These are exciting big picture passages, but do take time to think through the practical implications – especially how can we be more passionate about praying in God's kingdom. Maybe come up with practical ways your group can have a global mission focus, or pray for/get involved in international student work here at Queens. Coming up to Christmas (and the CU Carol Service) there is the opportunity to think through how to share the good news about the coming into the world of God's Anointed One with people around you.