

Session 3 The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 54-55

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Isaiah 49-55 is one unified section in which God promises to establish His rule over the whole world. These prophecies have their ultimate fulfillment in end-time events and the Millennium.
- B. Isaiah described how God’s Servant, Jesus, provided salvation for all the nations (53:1-12). Isaiah 54-55 outlines God’s promises and calls His people to respond with faith and obedience. The afflicted Servant of 53:1-12 understands the pain of the afflicted woman Zion of 54:1-10.
- C. One main theme in in Isaiah 54-55 is a call to respond to God—to sing (54:1), enlarge tents (54:2), not fear (54:4), listen and come (55:1-3), seek and call on Him (55:6), and turn to Him (55:7).
- D. Another key theme is to see what God promised—Zion will have many children (54:2-3); will not be forsaken by God (54:5-6); God will have compassion on her (54:7-8); will make a covenant of peace with her (54:10); will rebuild Jerusalem (54:11-12); and forever protect it (54:16-17). He freely offered His blessings to all (55:1-3), confirming them by reliable promises (55:10-12).
- E. Outline for Isaiah 54-55
 - 54:1-17 The Lord will greatly bless Zion**
 - 54:1-3 Zion is to sing and prepare for great increase
 - 54:4-10 The Lord loves Zion
 - 54:11-17 The Lord will rebuild and protect Zion
 - 55:1-13 Freely receive God’s salvation by responding in faith and obedience**
 - 55:1-7 The importance of responding to the Lord
 - 55:8-9 The Lord’s thoughts are much higher than man’s
 - 55:10-11 The Lord’s promises are reliable
 - 55:12-13 The certain success and victory of God’s Word
- F. Zion and physical Jerusalem are used throughout Isaiah as synonyms (Isa. 2:3; 4:3-4; 31:4-5, 9; 33:20; 40:9; 41:27; 52:1; 64:10, etc.). The name *Zion* has greater meaning than the physical city. *Heavenly Zion* speaks of the New Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22), *earthly Zion* of the city of Jerusalem and its residents, and *spiritual Zion* includes all who are committed to God’s purposes for Jerusalem.

II. THE LORD WILL GREATLY BLESS ZION (ISA. 54:1-17)

- A. In the Great Tribulation, Isaiah describes Jewish people expressing their fear that God had forsaken and forgotten them (49:14-18). Zion is addressed as an afflicted widow who has lost her children.
14“But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me...’ 15Can a woman forget her nursing child...? They may forget, yet I will not forget you [in the Great Tribulation].” (Isa. 49:14-15)
- B. Isaiah spoke to Zion’s despondency, calling her to awake (51:17; 52:1) to believe God’s promises after so much suffering and so many disappointments. In 54:1-17, he elaborated on God’s promises.

III. ZION IS TO SING AND PREPARE FOR GREAT INCREASE (ISA. 54:1-3)

- A. Zion is called to respond by “really believing God” and reflecting it in their songs, words, and actions (54:1-3). This not will be an easy message for all of them to receive instantly.
- ¹**“Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman,” says the LORD.** ²**“Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes.** ³**For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited.” (Isa. 54:1-3)**
- B. **O barren one:** Zion had not borne children to the measure of what was normally to be expected. Zion is barren in terms of the small number of messianic believers who walk in covenant with the God of Israel.
1. The Jewish population in Israel (2017) is 6.5 million people with almost 20,000 believers in 150 congregations in “the Land”—that is only 1/3 of 1%
 2. Yet, it is the largest number of believers since the book of Acts.
- C. **Break forth into singing:** Zion is to sing and cry aloud. Messianic believers are doing this now.
- D. **More are the children of the desolate:** Desolate Zion will have more children who love Jesus in generation the Lord returns than the married woman. The “married woman” here is not an actual group, but suggests the idea of having the number of children that one would normally expect.
- E. **Enlarge the place of your tent:** She was to stretch out the curtains of her tent, to lengthen her cords or ropes that held the tent in place, and to strengthen her stakes to which the ropes were tied.
- F. **Zion’s descendants will inherit the nations:** Zion will also inhabit desolate cities which were abandoned because of the significant amount of deaths in the final years (24:6; Mt. 24:22).
- ⁶**Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:6)**
- ²¹**For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world...**
²²**And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [to survive physically]... (Mt. 24:21-22)**
- G. **You shall expand:** Zion’s land for both the city and nation will grow to the right and left. The land that the Lord promised Abraham will extend from the Euphrates River to the river of Egypt (Gen. 15:18-21). The river of Egypt may be the Nile or a river in the northern part of the Sinai. If the Lord was referring to the whole length of the Euphrates River, then the land will include much of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, reaching from the southern border of Turkey to the bottom of Sinai and covering portions of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon. The land might measure 700 miles long (north to south) and 100 miles wide (east to west) or a total of area of about 70,000 square miles (the size of Missouri). Israel today is just 8,000 square miles (the size of New Jersey).

IV. THE LORD LOVES ZION (ISA. 54:4-10)

- A. The Lord called Zion to not allow themselves to be overcome with fear or shame (54:4-6).
⁴“Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood...⁵For your Maker is your husband...and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel ...⁶For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused,” says your God. (Isa. 54:4-6)
- B. **Do not fear:** Fear will be one of the major strongholds to overcome in the end times (51:7, 12, 13).
- C. **Do not be ashamed:** They will have just come out of the most intense global anti-Semitism.
- D. **You will forget:** They will not live in the pain of the shame of their youth, nor remember the reproach of their widowhood, nor live like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit.
1. Jerusalem will receive a double portion of grace and honor in the Millennium (61:7). Jesus will sit on His throne, and the New Jerusalem will descend there.
⁷Instead of your shame you shall have double honor ...they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. (Isa. 61:7)
- a. The glory of God will be openly manifested in Jerusalem (60:1-3).
¹Arise, shine; for...the glory of the LORD is risen upon you [Jerusalem]. ²For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth...His glory will be seen upon you. ³The Gentiles shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isa. 60:1-3)
- b. Jerusalem will be praised by all nations as (62:7). Jerusalem will be the city that most people visit with joy. Jerusalem will be the joy of the earth (Ps. 48:1-2).
⁷And give Him no rest till He establishes...Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:7)
- E. **Your Maker is your husband:** The Lord has both the power and desire to fulfill all of His promises to them. As the Lord of Hosts, Jesus is a warrior God. As our Redeemer, Jesus is the Man of 53:5. As the Holy One of Israel, Jesus is the transcendent God.
- F. The Lord will briefly lift His protection off Israel for part of the Great Tribulation (54:7-10).
⁷“For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. ⁸With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you ...⁹So have I sworn that...¹⁰My kindness shall not depart from you...” (Isa. 54:7-10)
- G. God will hide His face from Israel, and they will drink the cup of His fury (51:17; Hos. 5:14-15)
¹⁴“For I will be like a lion to Ephraim [Israel]...I, even I, will tear them and go away; I will take them away, and no one shall rescue. ¹⁵I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.” (Hos. 5:14-15)

V. THE LORD WILL REBUILD AND PROTECT ZION (ISA. 54:11-17)

A. Jerusalem will be a beautiful and glorious city (54:11-12), a godly city (54:13-14), and a safe, protected city (54:15-17).

B. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with great beauty and glory (54:11-12).

¹¹“O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. ¹²I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. (Isa. 54:11-12)

1. ***Afflicted one***: Jerusalem will be the most storm-tossed city in history.

2. ***Foundations with sapphires***: The city will be rebuilt with the greatest beauty and glory.

3. ***Gates of crystal***: Her gates will be clear crystal with sparkling jewels.

4. ***Walls of precious stones***: Her walls will be made of jewels, reflecting the New Jerusalem.

C. Jerusalem will be a godly city (54:13-14).

¹³All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children. ¹⁴In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear, and from terror, for it shall not come near you. (Isa. 54:13-14)

1. ***All of her children***: They will be taught by Jesus and walk in righteousness (Isa. 60:21).

²¹Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever... (Isa. 60:21)

2. ***Great peace***: The inhabitants of Jerusalem will walk in great peace.

D. Jerusalem will be a safe city with protection from all enemies (54:15-17).

¹⁷No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the LORD. (Isa. 54:17)

1. ***No weapon formed against you shall prosper***: The Lord will protect the people in Jerusalem from every possible weapon formed against them or any speech raised up against them.

2. ***The heritage of the servants of the Lord***: The Lord promises this to all who live in Zion.

VI. FREELY RECEIVE SALVATION BY RESPONDING IN FAITH & OBEDIENCE (ISA. 55:1-13)

- A. The Lord freely offers salvation to all (54:1-17); however, God’s people need to appropriate it by responding in faith and obedience (55:1-13).
- B. Isaiah 55 is a call to respond to Jesus by coming to Him (55:1-3), seeking Him (55:6), and repenting (55:7).
- C. The importance of responding to the Lord (Isa. 55:1-7):
- All are invited to receive salvation without earning it (55:1-2).
¹“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price... ²Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. (Isa. 55:1-2)
 - Everyone who thirsts*: The invitation is given to any who thirsts for God.
 - Come*: All are to come or take action to interact with Jesus.
 - Buy and eat*: Jesus exhorted His people to “buy oil” (Mt. 25:9) or to “buy gold” (Rev. 3:18), that is, to engage in the God-ordained process of acquiring intimacy with God. We do not earn this, but invest ourselves in a costly way to position ourselves to receive it.
⁹But the wise answered, saying, “No, lest there should not be enough [oil] for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy [oil] for yourselves.” (Mt. 25:9)
¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich... (Rev. 3:18)
 - Without money*: We do not deserve or earn any spiritual blessing.
 - Listen carefully to Me*: Take time to pour over and devour the Word. We are to feed our heart until our soul delights in abundance (55:2).
⁹I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book [scroll].” And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.” (Rev. 10:9)
- D. David is a model of how to respond to the Lord with confidence in God’s mercy (55:3-5).
- ³Incline your ear...I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.
⁴Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people. (Isa. 55:3-4)*
- The sure mercies of David*: The Lord raised up David as one with confidence in God’s mercy.
⁸But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever.... (Ps. 52:8)
 - David is a witness to the people: David was a man after God’s heart. Israel is to see David as a model of how the Lord wants His people to respond.

E. The Lord calls His people to seek Him and to turn from sinful actions and wrong thinking (55:6-7)
⁶Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isa. 55:6-7)

1. ***Seek the LORD while He may be found:*** We must respond when the Spirit convicts us.
2. ***While He is near:*** He is near in the times we sense the Spirit calling us to respond.
3. ***Forsake his way and thoughts:*** Be transformed by renewing your mind (Rom. 12:2).
4. ***Let him return to the LORD:*** We are to engage in relationship, not just dutiful actions.
5. ***He will abundantly pardon:*** The Lord delights in mercy (Mic. 7:18).

F. The Lord's thoughts are much higher than man's (55:8-9).

***⁸“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.
⁹“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa. 55:8-9)***

1. ***My thoughts are not your thoughts:*** The Lord has ideas and plans that we do not grasp.
2. ***My ways are not your ways:*** The Lord uses ways that promote love and humility in us.
3. ***As the heavens are higher than the earth:*** God's ways are so much higher than our ways, and His thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts (55:9).

G. The Lord's promises are reliable (55:10-11).

¹⁰“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud...¹¹So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isa. 55:10-11)

1. ***For as the rain comes down:*** The rain waters the earth and makes it bring forth fruit.
2. ***My Word will not return to Me void:*** The Word of God shall not return to Him without accomplishing what it was sent to accomplish.
3. ***It shall prosper:*** God's Word shall prosper in the purpose for which God sent it.

H. The certain success and victory of God's Word and purposes (55:12-13):

***¹²“For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
¹³Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” (Isa. 55:12-13)***

1. ***For you shall go out with joy:*** The Lord will lead His obedient people forward with joy.
2. ***Everlasting sign:*** The fulfillment of all that God promised in 54:1-55:12 will be a sign of the Lord's faithfulness throughout the millennial earth and beyond.