

Shorter Catechism 1
Isaiah 60
Psalm 45
Revelation 21

“What Are You Doing Here?”

October 7, 2012

I have to admit that I really enjoy weddings!

The minister has the best seat in the house –
and after you’ve done a few weddings you start to see some patterns.

There is invariably the look in the bride’s eyes (at some point):

“I can’t believe I’m actually doing this!”

There is the “strut” of the groom (at some point):

“Yup, this gorgeous lady is now my wife!”

Isaiah 60 is talking about a wedding (of sorts).

Indeed, if we had continued into Isaiah 61, the prophet goes on to say
that the Spirit of the LORD is upon him to proclaim good news to the captives,
“to grant to those who mourn in Zion –
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit.” (61:3)

And later in Isaiah 61:10,

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

The beauty of Jerusalem is the beauty of a wedding party:

the bridegroom, with his priestly headdress –
and the bride wearing the family jewels,

as the glory of the nations pours into the city.

This is also the theme of the great wedding Psalm – Psalm 45 –

which speaks of the majesty and beauty of the king,
the beauty and glory of his bride –
and the joy of all the earth at the wedding of these two!

So let us sing Psalm 45

Read Revelation 21

What are you doing here?

I don't mean "what are you doing here in church?",
but *what are you doing here* – on earth!

What is your purpose in life?

What is your mission?

Some people are driven by a clear purpose.

They have a weighty agenda, and they are going to accomplish it!

I find that I generally admire that sort of person –
but usually from a distance!

If you get too close, you are likely going to get crushed by their agenda!

Other people are different.

They don't have a clear agenda – they just wanna have fun!

These people are usually more fun to be around,
but as you get to know them,
you see that they are just wandering aimlessly,
and are often very *unhappy* people.

I used the word "weighty" for a reason.

The Hebrew word translated "glory" is the word "cavod" –
which means "weighty."

The glory-seeking person who is driven by his "weighty" agenda
has a sort of glory that lacks joy.

The joy-seeking person who just wants to have fun
has a sort of joy that lacks glory.

We were created to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Our problem is that we seek our glory and joy elsewhere,
with the result that we divide glory from joy (and joy from glory)
and wind up with shame and misery.

R. J. Breckinridge's grandson, B. B. Warfield, once told the story of an old man
who was visiting a rough and tumble town on the western frontier.

The old man saw a young man walking down Main Street with a confident demeanor.

The brawls and fistfights pouring out of the taverns into the street
didn't seem to trouble the young man–

he carried himself with a simple grace that belied his youthful appearance.

Intrigued, the older man stepped out in front him, put his finger on his chest,
and without introduction, asked, "what is the chief end of man?"

Without batting an eyelash, the younger man replied,

"man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

The old man said, “Ah, I thought as much.
You can always recognize a Shorter Catechism man!”

I grew up in a church that did very well at bible memorization,
but we never really saw how the scriptures all fit together.
And so from time to time I like to preach “catechetical” sermons,
drawing together the teaching of the scripture on particular topics
in order to set forth the basic doctrines of the Bible.

After all, the potential drawback to the practice of preaching only through books of the Bible
is that there are some doctrines that only become clear
as you see the connection between several different passages of scripture.
I try to show those connections as I preach through books,
but a catechetical series allows us to see these connections more clearly.

The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is easily the best known:
What is the chief end of man?

Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

It is worth pointing out that the catechism does not say that we have two purposes:

- 1) to glorify God, and
- 2) to enjoy him forever.

No, the catechism declares that we have one purpose—one chief end.

You cannot glorify God (properly) without enjoying him,
and you cannot enjoy God (properly) without glorifying him.

If we said that your chief end is to glorify God—well,
that is the chief end of all created things.

The chief end of that pew is to glorify God,
but the pew gets no enjoyment out of glorifying God!
Glorifying God is to be an enjoyable occupation.

But if we said that your chief end was merely to enjoy God forever,
that would sound rather hedonistic and self-centered.

No, the two concepts of glorifying God and enjoying him forever are bound together.

We were created to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

God did not create us simply that he might enjoy us,
but also that we might enjoy him.

So what does this look like?

Isaiah 60 is a good place to start.

Isaiah 60-61 is all about glory and joy.

Isaiah is speaking to Israel in exile.

In chapter 59, Isaiah has just spoken of how God himself must save Israel,
because there is no man on earth who can save us.

And so *when* God acts to save his people,
when the Redeemer comes to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from their sins,
and when God's Spirit is placed upon his people,

then the Glory of the LORD will come upon Israel:

1. The Glory of the LORD Has Come upon You (v1-3)

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.*

² *For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.*

³ *And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.*

When we talk about glorifying God,
we sometimes think in terms of "getting busy."
"What can we do to glorify God?!"

The first thing you need to remember is that we glorify God
when God reveals his glory in and upon us!

Isaiah speaks to Jerusalem – the holy city –
and says that "darkness will cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples,
*but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.*
And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

What does Jerusalem *do* in order to glorify God in verses 1-3?

"Arise, shine."

Those are the commands.

The imperative is to "arise, shine."

The verbs are feminine singular –

clearly addressing Zion (feminine singulars are almost always referring to the city;
masculine verbs refer to Israel; feminine verbs refer to Zion/Jerusalem).

Zion must arise and shine.

How?

Not by anything that Zion does!

At the heart of glorifying God is something that you cannot accomplish!
“For your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.”
The glory that shines in you is a glory that does not come from you!
And there is nothing you can do to produce this glory.
The glory of the LORD shines forth from Jerusalem
because God himself arises upon his people – his glory is seen upon you!

2. And He Has Made You Beautiful (v4-9)

In other words, the *gospel* is at the heart of our chief end.

Isaiah speaks to Israel in exile in verses 4-7
and says that God will bring the abundance of the sea
and the wealth of the nations – all the gold and frankincense –
and all the flocks and rams of the earth –
will be offered with acceptance on the altar of God.

And this is what makes the house of the LORD beautiful (v7):

⁴ *Lift up your eyes all around, and see;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from afar,
and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.*
⁵ *Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and exult,^[a]
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.*
⁶ *A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.*
⁷ *All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you;
the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you;
they shall come up with acceptance on my altar,
and I will beautify my beautiful house.*

The point of all this wealth and glory is *worship*.

Peter Brown has written a fascinating book about wealth in the early church.

Most people have been over-awed by how a few early Christians
gave *everything* to the poor and became monks.

Brown points out that *most* wealthy Christians did *not* do that.

Were they sell-outs?

No!

Jesus never said that *everyone* had to sell everything and give it to the poor

in order to follow him.
Jesus only told one man to do that –
so it is appropriate, once in a while, for someone to do that,
when they hear the call of Christ to do that!

But Jesus *did* say that *everyone* must seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness!
Jesus *did* say that we should lay up treasures in heaven
by our use of material wealth.
In other words, the Christian use of wealth must be oriented towards worship.

John Piper said it well when he said that *mission* exists for the sake of worship.
The wealth of the nations pours into Jerusalem – why?
So that God may beautify his beautiful house (the temple).
Revelation 21 makes it clear that the church *is* this beautiful bride –
the heavenly Jerusalem.
All our wealth should be devoted to the goal of beautifying that bride.

(Is that how you think when you are setting your family budget?
Is that how we think when we are setting the church budget?
And is that how you think when you are helping set your budget at work?
It's not about how much money do you give to the church:
it's about how you spend every dime!)

Isaiah says that the wealth of the nations – the abundance of the sea
shall pour into Jerusalem,
so that God might beautify his beautiful house!

Again, notice how *little* you are doing in this.
If *you* are Zion, then you are commanded to do one thing in verses 4-7:
“Lift up your eyes all around, and see.”

How do you glorify God and enjoy him forever?
Behold!
Lift up your eyes, and *see* what God is doing!

What is it that makes a bride so beautiful?
A woman can get all dolled up anytime.
Why is she so uniquely beautiful on her wedding day?
Because on her wedding day she is adorned not merely with fancy clothes –
but with the love of her bridegroom.
There is a radiance that shines forth from her face
that simply would not be there
if it wasn't shining forth from the bridegroom's eyes.

And when she *sees* him, her own face becomes radiant!

Of course, that shouldn't stop on the wedding day.

By the time of Isaiah 60, Zion has been Yahweh's bride for quite a while!

Isaiah speaks of the restoration from Exile –

the renewal of Jerusalem after apostasy, adultery, and idolatry.

But it is when the glory of the LORD arises upon Jerusalem

that Jerusalem will become beautiful.

It is, after all, the glory of God that shines in and through *her*!

Husbands:

this is what Christ has done for you!

this is what you are called to do for your wife!

You know how ugly you are in yourself, apart from Christ.

Jesus has made us beautiful through his love for us.

And when *we* see *him*,

our faces begin to shine with a radiance that we cannot hide!

This is then spelled out in verses 8-9:

⁸ *Who are these that fly like a cloud,
and like doves to their windows?*

⁹ *For the coastlands shall hope for me,
the ships of Tarshish first,
to bring your children from afar,
their silver and gold with them,
for the name of the LORD your God,
and for the Holy One of Israel,
because he has made you beautiful.*

Zion's children had been in exile.

But now that Zion's children are restored,

she has been made beautiful again.

This is explained further in verses 10-18,

as Isaiah explains how:

3. The Glory of the Nations Will Beautify God's House (v10-18)

I want you to listen to verses 10-18 in three ways:

first, there is the return from exile – plainly the central point that Isaiah makes;

second, there is the fulfillment in Christ – since he *is* the sanctuary, the holy place; but third, there is the fulfillment in *us* – since *we* are a holy temple in him.

¹⁰ *Foreigners shall build up your walls,
and their kings shall minister to you;
for in my wrath I struck you,
but in my favor I have had mercy on you.*

¹¹ *Your gates shall be open continually;
day and night they shall not be shut,
that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations,
with their kings led in procession.*

¹² *For the nation and kingdom
that will not serve you shall perish;
those nations shall be utterly laid waste.*

¹³ *The glory of Lebanon shall come to you,
the cypress, the plane, and the pine,
to beautify the place of my sanctuary,
and I will make the place of my feet glorious.*

¹⁴ *The sons of those who afflicted you
shall come bending low to you,
and all who despised you
shall bow down at your feet;
they shall call you the City of the LORD,
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

¹⁵ *Whereas you have been forsaken and hated,
with no one passing through,
I will make you majestic forever,
a joy from age to age.*

¹⁶ *You shall suck the milk of nations;
you shall nurse at the breast of kings;
and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

If you look at the history of the city of the earthly Jerusalem,
you should be able to see quite clearly that Jerusalem has *not* been majestic forever!
Rather, as Paul tells us, these promises are really about the heavenly Zion
(a point that Isaiah seems to foresee earlier in his prophecy).

Verse 16 is a curious way of saying it:

“you shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings.”

This is why our Confession refers to magistrates as “nursing fathers” to the church.

The image of breastfeeding is a powerful and beautiful image
of the relationship between church and state!
A mother desires to see her child grow and flourish.
She asks for nothing in return,
but allows her milk to flow forth from her body to nourish this little one.

The idea is that the nations should so desire to see the prosperity of Zion,
that will allow their bounty to flow to the church without regret.

Notice that in Isaiah's vision of the "new world order,"
the nations do not cease to exist (nor are they subsumed under Zion).

No, the church is a different sort of political order.

It is a political order!

Our heavenly citizenship trumps all other considerations.

We may *use* our earthly citizenship in the service of our heavenly citizenship,
but we should never prostitute our heavenly citizenship
to the aims and goals of the earthly city.

¹⁷ *Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
and instead of iron I will bring silver;
instead of wood, bronze,
instead of stones, iron.*

*I will make your overseers peace
and your taskmasters righteousness.*

¹⁸ *Violence shall no more be heard in your land,
devastation or destruction within your borders;
you shall call your walls Salvation,
and your gates Praise.*

And the city of God – the new Jerusalem – is a city of peace and safety,
with walls of salvation and gates of praise.

Verses 15-17 are full of contrasts.

Whereas (v15)--

You once were forsaken and hated, with no one passing through,
but I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age.

And instead of your former desolation (v16):

1) you shall suck the milk of nations (the Gentiles as nurses)

2) you shall nurse at the breast of kings

3) and you shall know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior and your Redeemer

Verse 17 then consists of four "instead's" (the same word translated "whereas" in v15)

Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
and instead of iron I will bring silver;
instead of wood, bronze
instead of stones, iron.

God will upgrade the building material of Zion,
so that his house might indeed be gloriously constructed.

And in the building task,
as his people labor to build this glorious temple,
“I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness.”

The LXX here translates “episcopous”—bishops.

The overseers of Christ’s house are given for peace and righteousness.

My task is to labor in the construction of that house,
not by lording it over you,
not by spiritually beating you and lashing you,
but by bringing peace and righteousness.

In other words, Isaiah is setting us up for what Paul will tell us over and over again:
you are no longer who you used to be!

When the glory of God arises upon his people,
and the glory of the nations comes flooding into Zion,
then—and only then—will the hearts of the people of God
be fundamentally changed.

4. Your God Will Be Your Glory that He Might Be Beautified (v19-22)

¹⁹ *The sun shall be no more
your light by day,*

*nor for brightness shall the moon
give you light;^[b]*

*but the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.^[c]*

²⁰ *Your sun shall no more go down,
nor your moon withdraw itself;
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended.*

²¹ *Your people shall all be righteous;
they shall possess the land forever,
the branch of my planting, the work of my hands,
that I might be glorified.^[d]*

²² *The least one shall become a clan,
and the smallest one a mighty nation;*

*I am the LORD;
in its time I will hasten it.*

And the result is the three “no mores” of verses 18-20.

1) Violence shall no more be heard in your land. (18)

The old order was characterized by devastation and destruction,
but the new order will see peace.

The gates of hell will never prevail against Christ’s church.

The walls of salvation and the gates of praise will endure forever.

2) “The sun shall be no more your light by day,”

But the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.”

John picks up on this in Rev. 21-22.

In the new order established by the Redeemer,
there is no need for sun or moon,
because your God will be your beauty.

3) “Your sun shall no more go down, nor you moon withdraw itself.”

This explains the problem with the sun and moon.

They always leave.

The sun and moon are as regular as clockwork,
but so is Israel.

Violence and deceit are as much rooted in the character of the people of God,
as day and night.

But the coming of the Redeemer is going to change all that.

As surely as day and night will be done away with—
those unfailing markers of the old order—

so surely will God change the character of his people.

“Your people *shall* all be righteous;

they shall possess the land forever,

the branch of my planting, the work of my hands,

that I might be glorified (or beautified).”

In this new creation, righteousness will prevail.

In this new order the old is over and gone; the new has come.

v22 “I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it”

Incidentally, the verb “to hasten” is the exact same word as “to enjoy.”

And the double meaning is particularly apt!

(The verb “to enjoy” is never found in this form,

so we are certain that it means “to hasten” –

but as God hastens the coming of his glory upon his people,

we may be confident that he enjoys it as well!

Truly God delights in the spread of his gospel to the ends of the earth.

And so when we say that

“man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever,”

we are simply saying that our purpose in life is to arise and shine

with the glory and beauty of our God as *he* shines forth upon us –

as *his glory* is made evident in us.

In the same way that you see the beauty and the happiness of a bride

reflected together on her wedding day,

even so, our chief end is to glorify God and to *enjoy* him forever.

Tonight we’ll be looking more at the theme of *enjoying* God.

Through no particular plan of mine, it so happens that *joy*

is the central theme of our text from 2 Chronicles 30!

But even as even as the result of weddings is babies –

so also when the church worships Christ,

and is radiant with his glory,

the result is spiritual babies...