

An Everlasting Name

For all the comfort and encouragement granted to the Old Testament saints by Isaiah's prophecies concerning the Messiah, the remnant people were not to imagine that the coming gospel age would be a time of blessing without trial. The gospel must go to all nations, and the Lord's elect will be gathered from the ends of the earth, but the growth of the church would not be trouble-free. Each generation of God's people have their peculiar blessings and their distinctive difficulties as we shall see in this and the coming chapters.

When God speaks

Isaiah opens this prophecy with a 'Thus saith the LORD'. It is our privilege to be always listening for the word of the Lord God while seeking opportunity to follow in His ways. He calls His people to 'keep ... judgment, and do justice' which we do by trusting Christ and deferring to God's word as our rule of faith and conduct. Isaiah calls on the remnant of his age to live expectantly looking for the soon appearance of the Messiah, for, says the LORD, 'my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed'.

'Blessed art thou, O Lord'

The Lord Jesus Christ is our salvation and our righteousness. It is precious to consider Christ as the 'blessed man' in verse 2. Who but He can properly lay hold upon 'judgment, and do justice', or 'keep the sabbath'? (The sabbath commandment is given to indicate the whole law.) Who but Christ can keep 'his hand from doing any evil'? As the Saviour lived perfectly and was obedient to all His Father's will so the blessings He won on the cross flow to those He acted for and represented.

Strangers and eunuchs

Isaiah foretells how the coming of Christ will bring an expansion of the gospel call and the enlargement of the church under the apostolic ministry. Two indicative examples are given of the changes this will bring. Before this, the son of a stranger had no right to share in the blessings of Israel. Before this, a eunuch was a reproach in Israel for being unable to father children. Now these distinctions would be removed. The types, symbols and legal distinctions that Paul calls the middle wall of partition were to be taken away. By grace, believing Jews and believing Gentiles were one in Christ Jesus.

Welcome to Jesus

Those who once were shunned and excluded will now be welcomed and honoured in Christ's kingdom. The despised will be called by an everlasting name. Redeemed sinners will bear the name and glory of their Saviour. They will be called the sons of God, a title Christ Himself will confess on the last day. The sons of strangers will be given an inheritance. Those who once were separated and far-off now delight to love and serve the Lord Jesus who first loved them.

God's holy mountain

In the apostolic age, under the preaching of the gospel, those who once were outcasts are brought into the holy mountain, that is, the church of the living God. This is the general assembly of God's elect and the church of the firstborn. It is a holy assembly because it is populated with people made holy by the righteousness of God. Here holy doctrines are proclaimed and pure worship is offered to the holy God. It is a mountain for prominence in God's sight, lasting strength and distinction.

An extensive work

The Lord will gather the outcasts of Israel, i.e. the elect remnant from amongst the Jews. He will also gather many others, a great multitude spanning countries and centuries. Jews and Gentiles will be called throughout the gospel dispensation until the whole number of God's elect from all nations will be gathered and united in the body of Christ. Not one of God's chosen people, Jew or Gentile, will be missed when the Lord comes to gather His jewels.

Dumb, useless dogs

God's elect will be converted and brought into the church, yet in time, Isaiah tells his listeners, the communities of the

Lord's people will be infiltrated by false professors and abused by false teachers for their own ends. The church of God will be attacked from without and within. Isaiah speaks of blind watchmen and describes them as dumb, greedy, lazy dogs. They are dumb as to true doctrine and spiritual truth yet they manage to call the beasts of the field and forest to spoil and devour God's flock while they gorge themselves with wine.

We have been warned

The beasts of the field and forest are different foes at different times and places. The blind watchmen are false teachers. By neglecting to preach the true gospel, as watchmen upon the walls of Zion should, they fail to protect the Lord's people and expose them to danger. They do not care for men's souls but exploit them for their own gain. More will be said of these men in coming chapters. For now it is sufficient to know that the Lord sees and knows their works and the Lord's people have been warned of their presence.

Amen

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