

Rejoice with Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:1–14)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (9/22/2019)

Introduction

1. In the last message we covered the Lord's intent to bring forth a new and redeemed race to be established in a new heavens and new earth (vv. 7–9).
 - a. In cryptic language, the Lord announced the sudden deliverance of Zion's true Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 7).
 - b. This birthing has greater implications in that His coming corresponds with the birthing of a new nation as well (v. 8).
 - c. *Zion* (the church) is also the Lord's means of birthing that new race or nation born in a day. This information is illuminated in Revelation 12.
2. During this time of Satan's war with the church on earth, the Lord promises that He will personally comfort Jerusalem and her children (vv. 10–14).
 - a. The passage before us explains how the people of God can be in the middle of Satan's war on Zion and yet enjoy the great benefit of Yahweh's promise: "*Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river*" (v. 12).
 - b. Here is a great conundrum: how can the church rejoice and enjoy peace in the midst of war? Remember, this promise is written to a specific people—
 - 1) Those who *tremble* at His Word (v. 5)
 - 2) Those who *mourn* over the condition of His church (v. 10b)It is to these that the Lord promises three things: *satisfaction, peace, and comfort.*

I. A Burden for Zion

1. Isaiah's charge to the reader is centered on the strong affection of the people of God for the church as seen in her *corporate* identity, "*Jerusalem.*"
 - a. While the identity here is *Jerusalem* or *Zion*, in the gospel age it will be the church.
 - b. There is no such thing in Scripture as an orphaned saint; all believers are assigned by Christ to a local body for mutual benefit and consolation. Without the church, Christ's followers will have great difficulty following Christ.
2. Isaiah desires Zion's *prosperity*.
 - a. *Peace* in Hebrew is "*shalom*," which comes from a verb meaning to render, pay, or reward, in a positive sense. The noun has the general meaning of completion and fulfillment—of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, or a restored relationship. It is often translated *welfare, health, prosperity, peace, quiet, tranquility, or contentment*. The more specific biblical reference is to one's relationship to God in covenant.
 - b. Isaiah argues that none shall share this valuable blessing but those who have a godly love for the church and seek for her deliverance from the contempt of the world.
 - 1) The state of covenant *shalom* is established when one's existence is characterized by *wholeness*.
 - 2) Thus, it is the duty of one who loves the church to *seek* for the *shalom* of the church.
 - 3) *Shalom* is affected by God's working a believer's obedience, resulting in *righteousness* (Isaiah 32:17–18; Psalm 102:14–17).

- c. The state of such believers is described as all “*who mourn over her*” (v. 10).
 - 1) These are deeply grieved and lament over her present condition as compared to the glorious state she was predestined to enjoy.
 - 2) They reflect the understanding of a people who know what is promised in the reign of Christ and the perfection to be realized in that reign.
 - 3) They prepare themselves for *joy*—praying, believing, and working for the realization of what is promised

II. Being Nourished by Zion

- 1. The Lord describes the joy of spiritual comfort in the figure of a mother and her infant child.
 - a. The present wretched and miserable condition of the church is to be changed into that of a happy and prosperous one.
 - b. “*Rejoicing with her in joy*” demands that the church take the position of a nursing child—one of dependence and desire.
 - c. The Lord designed nursing to bring about trust and bonding between the mother and her infant.
- 2. This spiritual bonding is to result in two things:
 - a. The nursing child is to be *satisfied* at the mother’s consoling breast.
 - b. The nursing child is to drink deeply with delight from her (Zion’s) glorious abundance. The text may also read, “*that you may be delighted with the brightness of her glory.*” Here the power of faith is demonstrated as the means of perseverance, for when nothing glorious appears (and certainly not in abundance), faith lays hold of the promise and rejoices in hope of its fulfilment (Hebrews 11:1).

III. Being Comforted in Zion

- 1. The Lord promises glorious things to Zion, which includes all Zion’s children (vv. 12–14).
 - a. Here the image is changed from Zion as a mother nursing her children to the Lord, as a mother, comforting her children.
 - b. It is the Lord who comforts Zion’s children, but He does so in Zion.
 - c. What a descriptive is given—you shall see, your heart shall rejoice, your bones shall flourish, and, most glorious of all, the Lord’s hand shall be known to His servants and His indignation to His enemies.
- 2. This interpretation of promised comfort is supported by Christ’s own final instructions to the disciples before His death (John 14:15–31).

What Can We Take Away?

- 1. The sad state of the church in our time is largely due to the failure of believers to understand God’s plan for Zion. How do you see the church and your role in that plan?
- 2. The Lord comforts the church with the promise that she shall flourish, abounding in everything desirable. Is this your experience today?
- 3. Those who tremble at His Word will find that the Lord will manifest Himself to them in the Word, and they will understand how the Lord will multiply the saints and enlarge the church. Nothing is more difficult to our natural eyes than to believe this promise. Do we not understand how much easier it is for God to do these things than it is for a woman to give birth to a child?