

Is. 54:1 Sing, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

This verse put a stop to my journaling for a while (and then the demands of life intervened) as I tried to do some research and finally understand what it was saying. I totally stumbled over it when Paul referenced it in Galatians 4. Frankly, I still don't feel comfortable with my understanding.

The part that I'm sure of is that it is an expression of praise and thanksgiving for God's future blessing on the people of Israel (cf verse 3).

The explanation that seemed to make the most sense referenced Israel as both the desolate woman and the married wife. She has been *desolate* (out of relationship with the Lord) for much longer than she has been *married* (in fellowship with the Lord). The "children of the desolate" could be a reference to the "church," the spiritual children of Abraham since the time of Christ.

A big problem that jumps out is the reference to Israel as barren. The nation of Israel had many great people of faith, spiritual children, before the time of Christ, and will again when the nation accepts the Messiah in the future.

My daughter-in-law eventually shared some thoughts that made good sense to me.

"Since bearing many children was taken to be a sign of blessing from God, and being barren or a widow (a.k.a "desolate") was taken to be a curse by God because of sin, I was thinking that Isaiah was referring to Israel as the barren woman who has been under the hardships of captivity and cruel rulers and has been hated throughout history and the "prosperous" nations that have ruled over Israel throughout history are the married woman. God is telling Israel about a time in the future when the "barren" nation (Israel, the supposedly unblessed nation by appearances) will have more children and be more prosperous than the nations that are married and appear to have every blessing from God."

This reasoning provides a natural flow into the following verses.

**Is. 54:2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;
Is. 54:3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.**

The time is coming when the nation of Israel will be a very numerous and prosperous people. Instead of being absorbed into Gentile nations, their own boundaries will increase to absorb lands that are now Gentile lands.

Is. 54:4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

God is so gracious and merciful. He encourages His people by declaring that they will not forever live in shame and reproach for their sin. In fact, the time is coming when they will totally forget the shame of the sins and rebellion of their youth (as a young nation) and widowhood (the time of broken fellowship, dispersion/captivity).

That's a wonderful principle that gives me great joy. In this body of flesh, we are continually haunted by the shame of past sins; but the day is coming when those memories will be completely erased.

Is. 54:5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

This is one of the verses that references Israel as the wife of YHWH. He is not only the Creator of the universe, but He personally created the nation of Israel as a separate people unto Him. God established the husband as the head of the family and the one responsible for spiritual instruction and leadership as well as material provision, protection, etc. for his family. God is the perfect husband; He will faithfully finish what He started. Just as surely as He created the nation, He will just as surely provide for their deliverance and redemption as a nation. When that redemption comes, the whole earth will recognize Him as GOD.

Is. 54:6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

Is. 54:7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

Is. 54:8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

God is a faithful husband. Though Israel may feel as if she has been cast off and divorced, that is not the truth of the situation. What may seem like very long years to us is actually but "a small moment" in God's economy of time. Though Israel may feel like she has suffered the great wrath of God for far too long, God describes His actions as due to "a little wrath....for a moment." He has not forsaken Israel. He has justly punished her sin and has continued to work to woo her back into relationship with Him. Paul, in fact, states this very truth.

Romans 11:11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Of special note is the fact that God's kindness is everlasting—without end; it's a permanent attribute of His character.

Is. 54:9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

God's promise was clear to Noah after the great flood that He would never again destroy the whole earth and its inhabitants by flood (cf Genesis 9:9-16). Now He is making a promise to the nation of Israel. When the time comes that Israel is redeemed by God as a nation, when she turns to the Messiah in faith, God is promising that the nation will never again experience His anger or rebuke. How can He be so sure that this will not be necessary? Because He is going to give them a new heart and His Spirit. Ezekiel talks about this time.

*Ezekiel 36:23-28 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. **A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:** and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **And I will put my spirit within you,** and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

Is. 54:10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

The topography of earth will continue to change, but the attributes of God are certain and unchanging. His kindness will never again depart from Israel once they have been restored to Him in faith. From that time on they will experience God's promise of *peace* (rest, health, prosperity, happiness).

This kindness is a result of God's mercy (compassion, love, pity) for His people.

The principles of the promises that God has made to Israel as His chosen people are also applicable to His chosen people of faith of all time. We can count on His mercy and kindness. The key difference between the church and Israel is that we have access to His peace now. We already have His Spirit within us to lead us in the way He would have us go and to empower us to act in obedience to His will for us.

Is. 54:11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.
Is. 54:12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

Isaiah is speaking to a people who are described as "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted."

"afflicted" = distressed in mind or circumstance

“tossed with tempest” = tossed about, sore, troubled, scatter with a whirlwind

“not comforted” = without a source of pity or consolation, unrepentant

As I looked at the Hebrew for these words, it painted a perfect word picture of a person in sin and rebellion against God. God is the source of peace; without Him you will face constant distress. God is a sure foundation, a refuge; without Him we are not secure and are easily buffeted by the enemy. God is our comfort and our loving shepherd; without Him we are left to the mercy of others who are as selfish as we are by nature. In God we are forgiven when we confess our sin; when we choose to be unrepentant, we cannot enjoy His forgiveness and the joy that comes with it.

The time is coming when Israel will once again be in a place of forgiveness and blessing. The LORD paints a picture of a land of beautiful buildings of the finest and most valuable materials.

Is. 54:13 And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children.

This verse immediately made me think of the time it was quoted by Jesus as recorded by John.

John 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

It's a precious truth. In spite of our sin and rebellion, the LORD promises that every person will be taught of God. It's up to the hearer to learn and respond. The LORD is always ready to respond the person who turns to Him in faith.

Isaiah was speaking to the nation of Israel. Jesus expanded the teaching to include all men everywhere. Jesus was ministering first and foremost to the house of Israel, but His message was directed to all. When the Roman centurions came to Him in faith (Matthew 8 & Luke 7), He responded. When the Canaanite woman came to Him in faith (Matthew 15 & Mark 7), He responded. When He gave the great commission, it was to go to all nations (Matthew 28).

The nation of Israel in particular has experienced great distress and mistreatment at the hands of the nations—often in the name of Christ. As horrendous as has been their experience out of the land and out of relationship with God, as magnificent will be their experience of blessing in the land when restored in relationship to God.

Is. 54:14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

“establish” = To make stable or firm; to fix immovably or firmly; to set (a thing) in a place and make it stable there; to settle; to confirm.

When Israel turns to Messiah in repentance and faith, they will be firmly fixed as a nation of righteousness. Never again will they suffer oppression at the hands of other nations. They will never again experience fear because of the actions of men because they will be secure in the protection of their God.

Is. 54:15 Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.*

There may be some nations that will choose to rebel and make Israel their enemy, but it won't be because the Lord has chosen to use that nation as an instrument of punishment or chastisement for His people. In fact, any nation that chooses to come against Israel will be defeated. God will protect His people and will not allow them to ever suffer again at the hands of another nation.

Is. 54:16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.

This verse seems to be affirming that God is the Creator of men; He has given them wisdom and abilities—some of which they choose to use for evil. Sometimes, He even uses their evil intents to accomplish His purposes.

Is. 54:17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.*

This verse is a promise to the restored Israel. Never again will they have to fear the weapons of men. Any person who dares to speak evil of God's people will be condemned. (The idea being to me that only those who don't belong to God will speak evil of those that are His.)

The last half of this verse is a special promise that establishes the biblical basis that God will bless ALL of His servants according to the principles He sets forth that reflect His character. Certain promises were made specifically to the nation of Israel, but the principle declares blessing for ALL His servants.

Those who are His servants are righteous because He has given them of His righteousness. Again, Paul affirms this truth in his writing to the Romans and Corinthians.

*Romans 4:9-13 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; **that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:** And the father of circumcision to them who are not*

of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

2Corinthians 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.***