

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 54:1-17

Topic

The LORD tells the nation of Israel what He has in store for her as His wife.

Title

"I Now Announce Us Husband & Wife"

Christians who held a conviction that it was wrong for them to watch a Rated R movie were conflicted: How could they not join their brothers & sisters who rented-out theaters and invite unbelievers to watch *The Passion of the Christ*?

It was the top-grossing Rated R movie of all time. It has since slipped to #9. It has a chance to move up on the list if it does well in its theater re-release this year commemorating its 20th anniversary.

Have you ever wondered why Christ's suffering is called His passion? The Latin word *passio* means *suffering*. Its first recorded use is in early translations of the Bible that appeared in the 2nd century to describe the death of Jesus. Its meaning remained exclusively 'Christological' until the middle of the 11th century. Then its meaning & usage began to change:

- It started being used of His followers to describe their persecution & martyrdom.
- By the 13th century, *passion* was being used to refer to any strong drive or emotion in anyone.
- William Shakespeare is believed to be the first to use it to describe a strong romantic and sexual desire.

The LORD expressed a more Shakespearean passion in chapter fifty-four. "For your Maker *is* your husband."

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 In His Passion The Lord Is Always Preserving You, and #2 In His Passion The Lord Is Always Providing You.

#1 - In His Passion The Lord Is Always Preserving You (v1-9)

I say, "Jesus preserves you," and some would say, "Only if you persevere."

The Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is our attempt to understand "whether or not a true believer who has experienced genuine regeneration can fall away from the faith and perish everlastingly."

The Lord is portrayed as preserving His people. He says to them, "With great mercies I **will** gather you... With everlasting kindness I **will** have mercy on you."

For their part, the Jews do everything they can to *not* persevere.

IMHO, Christians over-emphasize perseverance to the point it becomes works. It's easy to fall into self-righteousness.

If you are going to over-emphasize something, then you under-emphasize something else. Christians under-emphasize the Lord's passionate preserving of the saints. That is one reason we like to talk more about what Jesus has done & is doing for us than what we are expected to do for Him.

Chapter 54 is future prophecy touching upon the Great Tribulation, the Return of the King, the Kingdom of God on Earth, and eternity.

The Great Tribulation that lasts 7yrs has many names. We prefer to call it The Time of Jacob's Trouble. It reminds us that its purpose is to save Israel. When we say Great Tribulation, we mean The Time of Jacob's Trouble, and vice-versa.

One more clarification. Historically, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had already been destroyed & dispersed. Isaiah was thus addressing the Southern Kingdom of Judah. I'm going to use 'Israel' in the general sense of God's future people, the "all Israel" that the apostle Paul says will be saved.

Isa 54:1 '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.

The LORD compared His nation to "barren" women "who have not borne," who "have not" been in labor. It was a great shame to be barren. So much so that the LORD called Israel "desolate."

In the OT Book of Deuteronomy the LORD lists blessings upon Israel for her obedience, and what He called "curses" upon them for disobedience. Barren wombs are on that list of curses.

Why should they "sing," "break forth into singing, and cry aloud?" Because "desolate" Israel would be brought to salvation and fulfill all that God promised her - *including having children too numerous to number.*

Being temporarily "desolate" is better than being "the married woman." These were Gentile nations that prospered while Israel languished.

Isa 54:2 "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.

"You're gonna need a bigger tent!" Israel has never possessed all of the land God promised her. In the future, not only will she possess all of it; she will need to annex more.

Isa 54:3 For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited.

Prophecy check: Has verse three happened? **No.**

Isa 54:4 "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 anymore.

Israel could also be compared to an old widow in a 'reproachable' widowhood. "No worries," said the LORD. A renewed Israel was coming and all such comparisons will be forgotten.

Isa 54:5 For your Maker *is* your husband, The LORD of hosts *is* His name; And your Redeemer *is* the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

After the incident at the Tower of Babel, God was the "Maker" of a new nation through Abraham & Sarah. Their son, Isaac, would produce their grandson, Jacob, who would produce the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Israel is suddenly presented as the wife of Jehovah.
Is the NT Church ever portrayed as fully married? As a wife?

No! We are always the betrothed, yet-unwed "bride" and Jesus our heavenly Bridegroom.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains, "*Any clear understanding of the Scriptures requires that proper distinctions be maintained. One of these key biblical distinctions is the contrast between Israel and the Church.*"

He is "The LORD of Hosts." It means, the LORD of Armies. It may seem odd to say so, but even though God is omnipotent, *He maintains a strong military!*

Their Husband is their "Redeemer." It suggests familial ties & obligations that only Jesus could fulfill.

This "Holy One" of Israel is simultaneously "the God of the whole Earth." It's Jesus.

Isa 54:6 For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God.

Israel was guilty of repeated, unrepented of, spiritual adultery. She worshipped idols and participated in abominable pagan sex rituals. *God would restore her!*

The Babylonian captivity cured Israel of idolatry once-for-all. As a nation, however, they remain in unbelief of their Messiah. Once again Dr. Fruchtenbaum is helpful: "*To this day, Israel is still in the period of punishment. The persecutions of the Jews around the world and the present worldwide dispersion prove this point.*"

There is no antisemitism in saying this. We are pro-Israel. We support her statehood. The United States ought to reject any proposal to divide Israel into two states.

Isa 54:7 "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.

Isa 54:8 With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer.

At any point Israel could have repented and they would find that God was right there. What, then, does "I have forsaken you" and "hid My face from you" mean?

It looks forward to their Time of Trouble.

The word "little" that modifies "wrath" can be translated "overflowing, "outburst," or "surge of anger." The LORD is anticipating the Time of Jacob's Trouble, the culmination of His "wrath." That whole period of seven years is known as the Day of His Wrath. The discipline will be so strong that Israel will conclude they are forsaken, and that God is hiding His face.

This isn't at all talking about Jesus & His relationship with you, or His Church. He promised to never forsake you, or hide from you. It is on you to sort things out when you feel that way.

His "mercies" are "great." "His "kindness" is "everlasting." A lot of things in your Christian life eventually boil down to this: Am I going to believe what God said? Or am I going to believe how I feel?

Isa 54:9 "For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you."

The dialog is so casual, so intimate. God says, "You know, this kinda reminds Me of the flood."

Outside, all around, was tumult & terror. Water from the sky, waters from the deep. Think of the most terrible storm, or flood, you have encountered. It was nothing compared to the flood.

Inside the ark - Noah & Co. were kept safe through it.

The flood story starts in chapter six of Genesis. In the closing verses of chapter five we read, "Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the

days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him" (v21-25).

Enoch was raptured. Note that it was *before* the flood. He was saved *from out of* the flood while Noah and his family were saved going *through* the flood. Enoch is a type of the Church. Jesus has promised us we will not be on the Earth during the Day of Wrath (Revelation 3:10).

How do we persevere? You discover these essentials: Abide in Christ, talk to God through prayer, engage with the Word, participate in Church life, and let others know about Jesus.

Do not forget passion. You are the Lord's passion and He must be yours. The more you are humbled by seeing Jesus preserving you, the more you'll be motivated by love to persevere. Otherwise your perseverance drifts into works and becomes a destructive legalism.

#2 - In His Passion The Lord Is Always Providing You (v10-17)

He'll feel the Earth move under His feet.

The prophet Zechariah says this about the Return of the King: "And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, *Making* a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south" (4:14).

In verse ten of our text we read, "For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

Massive changes in the heavens and on Earth are in store for the future time of tribulation. Those enduring it will certainly think it is the end of humanity.

Isa 54:11 "O you afflicted one, Tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted..." Sounds like the last 3½ years of the Tribulation when Israel is being hunted down by the antichrist.

Isa 54:11 "... Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, And lay your foundations with sapphires.

Isa 54:12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies, Your gates of crystal, And all your walls of precious stones.

“Gates” & “walls” are physical components of a city. It is not the New Jerusalem. The description doesn’t match what we read in the Revelation.

Jerusalem on Earth will be destroyed by antichrist & his armies before the Lord returns. Could this be the rebuilt, earthly Jerusalem, during the Millennial Kingdom? Sure.

Isa 54:13 All your children *shall be* taught by the LORD, And great *shall be* the peace of your children.

This is a snapshot of the future Kingdom on Earth. It is a dispensation of peace on Earth during which Jesus will set time aside to teach children.

Maybe we should call the thousand years Story Time.

Isa 54:14 In 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 54:15 Indeed they shall surely assemble, *but* not because of Me. Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake.

Throughout its history, God ‘assembled’ nations to discipline Israel. In fact 150 years after Isaiah wrote, the Jews would be conquered by Babylon.

There will be unbelievers in the Millennium. At its end, Satan will be let out to “assemble” against the Lord & His people.

Isa 54:16 “Behold, I have created the blacksmith Who blows the coals in the fire, Who brings forth an instrument for his work; And I have created the spoiler to destroy.

The next “Destroyer” would be Babylon, who leveled the Jewish Temple. Then Rome, who leveled the Jewish Temple. These would be “created” instruments of God’s discipline.

The antichrist will defile and level the rebuilt Temple in the future.

A whole lot of suffering is still in Israel’s future.

Isa 54:17 No 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.

Notice the important word, "heritage." This promise is inherited *in the future*. I don't in any way want to discourage you, but this verse is only for Israel, *and even they can't claim it yet*.

Apologist Greg Kokl writes, "Many promises in the Bible were made to other people and we cannot legitimately claims those. We can learn from them. They're profitable for us. All Scripture is."

Christian - do not claim promises that God never made to you.

Claim Second Corinthians 12:9-10, "And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

We trip over the word, "sufficient." Its synonyms are *adequate, passable, OK, minimal, and ordinary*.

Is that what Jesus meant? "My grace is passable...My grace is minimal... It's OK in a pinch."

To the apostle Paul it meant "strength." It was the the strength to "boast in... [and] take pleasure in [his] infirmities."

"Reproaches," "needs," "persecutions," and "distresses" are no match for sufficient grace.

God provides you everything necessary for a godly life. Thomas Brooks wrote, "God hath in Himself all power to defend you, all wisdom to direct you, all mercy to pardon you, all grace to enrich you, all righteousness to clothe you, all goodness to supply you, and all happiness to crown you."