

## YOUR CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

*54 Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who never experienced the labor of childbirth, because the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the married woman, declares Jehovah. <sup>2</sup>Enlarge the place of your tent, let them stretch out the curtains of your tent—do not hold back! Lengthen your cords; strengthen your stakes! <sup>3</sup>You will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess the nations and settle in their desolate cities. <sup>4</sup>Do not be afraid, for you shall not suffer shame; do not fear disgrace, for you shall not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth; and you will no longer remember the reproach of your widowhood—<sup>5</sup>because your Maker is your husband, Jehovah of hosts is his name, and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, he is called the God of the whole earth.*

*<sup>6</sup>Jehovah has called you [back] like a wife [who was] deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married at a young age, only to be rejected, declares your God. <sup>7</sup>For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will bring you back. <sup>8</sup>In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you, declares Jehovah your Redeemer. <sup>9</sup>To me this is [like] the waters of Noah: just as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall never again overflow the land, so [now] I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. <sup>10</sup>The mountains may depart and the hills may shake; but my loving kindness will not depart from you and my covenant of peace will not be shaken, declares Jehovah, who has compassion on you.*

*<sup>11</sup>O afflicted [city], lashed by storms and not comforted, look—I will rebuild you with beautiful stones, I will lay your foundation with sapphires. <sup>12</sup>I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. <sup>13</sup>All your children will receive instruction from Jehovah, and the well-being of your children will be great. <sup>14</sup>You shall be established by righteousness; tyranny will be far from you; so you will have nothing to fear. Terror, too, will be far from you; it will not come near you. <sup>15</sup>Listen. They may assemble themselves together [against you], but [they will] not do so at my command. Whoever assembles against you will fall because of you. <sup>16</sup>Listen, I am the one who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and by his work forges a weapon. I have also created the destroyer [with the mission] to destroy. <sup>17</sup>No weapon forged against you will prevail. Furthermore, you will condemn every tongue that speaks against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah—and their righteousness is from me, declares Jehovah. (Isa. 54:1-17)*

### **Introduction**

A bank in Binghamton, New York, had a florist send a bouquet of flowers to a competitor who had recently moved into a new building. But there was a mix up at the floral shop and the card mistakenly sent with the bouquet read: With our deepest sympathy. The florist was greatly embarrassed and offered apologies to both parties. But he was even more embarrassed when he discovered that the card intended for the bank had been accidentally attached to a floral arrangement sent to

a funeral home. That card read: Congratulations on your new location! (*Our Daily Bread*, 5/25/92)

Although a card expressing such a sentiment might appear to be out of place attached to a floral arrangement in a funeral home, there is a sense in which it is very appropriate when addressed to a Christian. In the future the believer in Christ will be translated into a wonderful new location.

For the consolation and encouragement of His Old Testament people—and for our consolation and encouragement as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—the LORD reveals the heritage that is in store for us as His children. Once again, we must bear in mind that these future eschatological realities are being communicated to the Old Testament people of God in term that would be familiar to them, to appreciate their import more fully, it is necessary for us to interpret them in light of New Testament revelation.

### **I. We Shall Inherit the Full Bounty of God's Renewed Creation (Isa. 54:1-3)**

In verse 1 Jerusalem, personified and portrayed as a barren woman, is instructed to sing for joy—because the LORD shall bless her with an abundance of children. The tent in which this woman presently lives in a solitary existence must be enlarged, because it is no longer adequate to house all the children the LORD will give her (vs. 2). Indeed, the LORD declares, *“You will spread out to the right and to the left;”* that is to say, God's people will expand in every direction. He goes on to say, *“your descendants will dispossess the nations and settle in their desolate cities.”* The LORD will finally remove the nations of the world from His presence and cause His redeemed people to occupy the new creation.

What is this prophetic picture portraying? First, it is indicating that the LORD's people shall be preserved, they shall not be exterminated by their captors; on the contrary, they shall be re-gathered to their God and dwell with Him in the Promised Land, (which ultimately is the new creation.) In the Old Testament era the people of Israel were preserved in Babylon, restored to God's presence, and resettled in the land of Canaan with the LORD's blessing. The final fulfillment of this promise is realized in the fact that, by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the whole body of believers shall be preserved through the final judgment and welcomed by our heavenly Father into His new creation, there to glorify and enjoy Him with the fullness of His presence and blessing. Here we may take note of such a passage as Revelation 22:1-5, which even now is still compelled to present these eschatological events in figurative terms:

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the*

*healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. (Rev. 22:1-5)*

This is our Christian heritage: as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be preserved from the final judgment in order to inherit the fullness of God's new creation. As the Lord Jesus declares, "*Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom*" (Lk. 12:32.) Such is the comforting promise He made to all who believe in Him

## **II. We Shall Enjoy Complete Acceptance with God (Isa. 54:4-10)**

The LORD addresses Jerusalem (the city representing all of His covenant people) and declares, "*Do not be afraid, for you shall not suffer shame; do not fear disgrace, for you shall not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth; and you will no longer remember the reproach of your widowhood*" (vs. 4.)

The reason for this sure word of comfort and confidence is given in verse 5. "*Your Maker is your husband*"—the very God who made us and to whom we must give an account is also the Christian's loving Husband who will receive His people as His precious bride on that last great day. "*The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer*"—the God who is Himself infinitely holy and who demands holiness is at the same time the Redeemer of His people. He Himself has satisfied the demands of His holy law and provided us with His own perfect righteousness, note the testimony of the Apostle Paul,

*... I regard all things as loss on account of the all-surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, because of whom I have suffered the loss of all things. Indeed, I regard all such things as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup>and be found in him—not having my own righteousness, which is derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that is from God [received] by faith. (Phil. 3:8-9)*

The LORD now describes His people as a wife who has been restored to her husband. Israel in her rebellion is compared to a wife who has been divorced for her unfaithfulness, but now she is restored and brought back into covenant relationship with her husband (vs. 6.) The LORD declares,

*For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will bring you back. <sup>8</sup>In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but **with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you**, declares Jehovah your Redeemer. (Isa. 54:7-8)*

In Old Testament terms, here is a reference to Israel's exile into Babylon and their restoration to the LORD and His presence in the Promised Land of Canaan. In ultimate terms, here is a reference to Christ's atoning death at Calvary and the believer's union with Christ in His crucifixion and resurrection. The overflowing wrath of God was poured out upon Christ at Calvary on behalf of all those who believe in Him. At the same time, all those who believe in Him are united to Him by faith, and consequently, have entered into His death, as the Apostle declares, *"I have been crucified with Christ"* (Gal. 2:20.) Furthermore, just as Christ was raised from the dead on the third day, so we are united with Him in His resurrection life and will finally experience the resurrection of the body on the last day:

*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup>If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection ... <sup>10</sup>The death [Christ] died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. (Rom. 6:4-5,10)*

In verses 9-10 of Isaiah 54 the LORD alludes to His sure covenant with Noah (the divine pledge that He would never again destroy this present world with a flood) as evidence and assurance that His restored "wife" can have full confidence in her husband's renewed marriage vows:

*To me this is [like] the waters of Noah: just as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall never again overflow the land, so [now] I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. <sup>10</sup>The mountains may depart and the hills may shake; but my lovingkindness will not depart from you and my covenant of peace will not be shaken, declares Jehovah, who has compassion on you. (Isa. 54:9-10)*

In describing that moment of absolute abandonment (experienced by His people in the Babylonian Captivity and ultimately experienced at Calvary), the LORD had used the term *"a surge of anger,"* or, *"overflowing wrath"* (vs. 8.) Now, picking up on that term, the LORD compares that outpouring of righteous wrath to *"the waters of Noah"* (i.e.; the great flood with which He judged the world in the days of Noah)—and He does so as a further means of providing comfort and assurance for His people. The LORD swore to Noah that never again would He cause the flood waters to cover the whole land (vs. 9a.) Likewise, the LORD now swears that He shall never again inflict His judgment against His people (vs. 9b;) we may also take note of Romans 8:1, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Indeed, the promise of God now made to His people is even more sure (i.e.; of longer duration) than the promise made to Noah (vs. 10.) As recorded in Genesis 8:22, God promised Noah that there would never again be a universal flood for as long as the earth remains, *"As long as the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter,*

*and day and night shall not cease."* But now the LORD assures His people that even when this present creation is brought to its cataclysmic end, His covenant faithfulness will continue: *"The mountains may depart and the hills may shake; but my lovingkindness will not depart from you and my covenant of peace will not be shaken, declares Jehovah"* (vs. 10.)

What is this prophetic picture portraying? The LORD's people will not be ashamed when they stand before Him, they will not be cast away, for He has redeemed them and established with them an everlasting covenant of peace. The Old Testament application: because of their spiritual adultery the LORD had divorced His people Israel, sending them away into the Babylonian Captivity. But now He has called them back to Himself with the assurance that their shame has been replaced by a renewed covenant of peace with the LORD their God. The final fulfillment of this promise: for all those who believe in Jesus the Messiah, the world's day of judgment shall prove to be our wedding day; rather than being cast away in shame, we will be received as the Lord's bride with whom He makes an everlasting covenant of peace:

*... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water by the word—<sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in glory, without blemish or wrinkle or any [other] such thing, but being holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:25-27)*

This is our Christian heritage: as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall experience complete acceptance with God on the day of judgment and for all of eternity in Christ Jesus our Savior. In the words of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, (Question and Answer #38),

*What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?*

At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly [publicly] acknowledged and acquitted on the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

### **III. We Shall Participate in the Beauty of Righteousness (Isa. 54:11-14a)**

In verses 11-12 of Isaiah 54 the LORD promises to rebuild Jerusalem into a city of priceless and breath-taking beauty: the foundation stones shall be sapphires; the towers shall be made of rubies; the gates shall be sparkling jewels; and the walls shall be precious gem stones.

In verses 13-14a the residents of the heavenly city are described in the following terms. They shall be taught by the LORD; that is to say, they shall willingly accept His instruction and walk in His ways. In consequence, *"the well-being of your children will be great;"* the LORD's desire for His people, as expressed in Isaiah 48:18a, shall be fully realized, *"If only you had paid attention*

*to my commandments, your peace would have been like a river.”* Because it shall be a city of righteousness, inhabited by a people made righteous by the LORD Himself, it shall be established as an everlasting city (vs. 14a.)

What is this prophetic picture portraying? The LORD’s people shall be completely transformed into the likeness of Christ and that will be a spectacular display of righteousness and holy beauty. In Old Testament terms, there was the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and the temple, accompanied by a renewed commitment to the LORD, note Nehemiah 10:28-29,

*The rest of the people—priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand— <sup>29</sup>all these now join their brothers the nobles, and bind themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the Law of God given through Moses the servant of God and to obey carefully all the commandments, regulations and decrees of Jehovah our Lord.* (Neh. 10:28-29)

Then, through the prophet Haggai, came the promise of spectacular glory yet to be revealed: *“The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house, declares Jehovah of hosts”* (Hag. 2:9a.)

The fulfillment of this promise in its final form will be realized when the LORD has completed the process of transforming (re-constructing) His people into the very likeness of Christ His Son, we shall then be seen to be a spectacular display of the beauty of righteousness, radiating the very glory of Christ our Savior: *“you are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people appointed to be [God’s] own possession, so that you might display the virtues of him” who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”* (1 Pet. 2:9.)

This is our Christian heritage: as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall finally be transformed into the full brilliance of the spectacular beauty of His righteousness:

*Beloved, now we are children of God, but it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him just as he is.* (1 Jn. 3:2)

#### **IV. We Shall Experience Perfect Peace and Security (Isa. 54:14b-17)**

In verse 14b the LORD promises His people that they shall be far from oppression and terror—such things shall not come near them. Verse 15 indicates that those who do gather themselves together against the LORD’s people shall not do so at His command (as did Assyria and Babylon.) Consequently, any powers that set themselves against God’s people without His consent shall not prevail: *“Whoever assembles against you will fall because of*

*you.*” They shall fail in their efforts against the LORD’s people because the LORD Himself is the Almighty, able to defend His people: *“Listen, I am the one who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and by his work forges a weapon. I have also created the destroyer [with the mission] to destroy. <sup>17</sup>No weapon forged against you will prevail”* (Isa. 54:16-17a.) The blacksmith may be the one who creates the weapons of war, but it is the LORD who has created both the blacksmith and the destroyer who wields the weapon made by the smith—they are both under His almighty hand and can do nothing other than what He permits, and He will not permit the annihilation of His people.

What is this prophetic picture portraying? The LORD’s people shall be preserved and finally delivered from all demonic tyranny and delivered into a state of perfect peace and rest. The Old Testament fulfillment of this promise is seen in the fact that even though the surrounding nations opposed the rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem in the days following the return from the Babylonian Captivity, the LORD caused that opposition to be frustrated and His temple and city to be reconstructed—thus His people were re-established in the Land of Promise and in their fellowship with the LORD their God. The final fulfillment of this promise is found in the fact that the LORD shall preserve our souls and finally bring us into a state of everlasting peace and tranquility in His own immediate presence, having once and for all banished the devil and all his hosts to the final judgment of the lake of fire. Again, in the words of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, (Question and Answer #26),

*How does Christ execute the office of a king?*

Christ executes the office of a king, ... in ruling and defending us and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

This is our Christian heritage: as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be guarded for the kingdom of God where we shall enjoy perfect peace and tranquility by virtue of the victory and reign of Christ our King:

*... the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength ... And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will rescue me out of every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.* (2 Tim. 4:17-18)

## **Conclusion**

Christian, when you find yourself discouraged or in need of consolation, look to the heritage reserved for you in Christ: 1) We shall inherit the full bounty of God’s renewed creation; 2) We shall enjoy complete acceptance with God; 3) We shall participate in the beauty and glory of righteousness; and 4) We shall experience perfect peace and security. As the concluding verse of this passage testifies, *“This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah.”*

