

## ***Isaiah Part 15: Judah's Song and the Redemption of Israel***

### **Isaiah 26 and 27**

#### ***Judah's song, the city of God and the city of man (Isaiah 26 v 1 to 11)***

“In that day” (v 1) – the context from the preceding chapters points to the day of the Messiah’s ultimate triumph, the day when the Jesus reigns over Israel, and over all the world. ‘In that day’, there will be much joyful singing, such as this song that will be sung in the land of Judah. “We have a strong city” – since cities came into being after the fall, man has never known a truly godly city. But ‘in that day’, all will know the strength and glory of the ‘city of God’. Contrast this with the ‘lofty city’ of verse 5.

- Think over the attitudes of heart expressed in verses 3, 4, 8, 9, 13 and 19: do you share this same trust in God? How should God’s people respond to his mercy, and to his judgment?

“You keep him in perfect peace” (3) – what a promise! God promises that we can have perfect peace, and even be kept in a place of perfect peace. In Hebrew, the term perfect peace is actually *shalom shalom*. This shows how in Hebrew, repetition communicates intensity. It isn’t just *shalom*: it is *shalom shalom*, perfect peace. “Whose mind is stayed on you” – this is the place of perfect peace, and the source of it. When we keep our *minds* stayed (settled) upon God himself, then we can be kept in his perfect peace. Remember, we are to love the LORD our God with all of our mind (Matthew 22 v 37); we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12 v 2); we can have the ‘same mindset as Christ’ (Philippians 2 v 5); we are to set our minds on things above (Colossians 3 v 2). Where we set our minds is essential in our walk before the Lord. “Because he trusts in you” – we keep your minds stayed on whatever we are trusting; when we trust the Lord, we keep our minds stayed on him. If we trust God, it will show in our actions, but it begins in our minds. “Trust in the LORD forever” (v 4) – why? “For the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.”

“He has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city” (v 5) – the city of man is lofty, and its inhabitants dwell on the heights, but God will humble them nonetheless. The ‘city of man’, the world system, is all about power and prestige, built on the backs of the weak and the poor. But God will turn all that around, and “the feet of the poor” (v 6) will trample it down. Jesus expressed the same principle in Matthew 5 v 5.

“The path of the righteous is level” (v 7) – why? Because God makes “level the way of the righteous”. “Your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul” (v 8) – in God’s kingdom, his people love him and desire him. This desire is displayed in *waiting*: “O LORD, we wait for you”; in *yearning*; and in *seeking*: “My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you” (v 9). By contrast, the wicked are ungrateful for God’s goodness: “If favour is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness” (v 10).

#### ***Promises to the humble (Isaiah 26 v 12 to 21)***

“You have indeed done for us all our works” (v 12) – even our good works are works that he has done in us (see Ephesians 2 v 8 to 10). “Other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance” (v 13) – the humble person repents of past idolatry, and sees its folly: “They are dead, they will not live” (v 14). The humble heart sees God’s victory over idols: “You have visited them with destruction.” “You have increased the nation” (v 15) – the humble person recognizes that God alone is responsible for increase and blessing. “O LORD, in distress they sought you” (v 16) – the humble heart relies on God in times of distress and futility. “We were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind” (v 18) – the humble person knows the futility of working apart from the direction and blessing of God. “Your dead shall live” (v 19) – the Old Testament had a shadowy understanding of the after-life, as it was Jesus who “destroyed death and... brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1 v 10). But here is a confident expectation of resurrection and glory for those who humbly trust in God.

***[MORE OVER...]***

“Come, my people, enter your chambers” (v 20) – Isaiah prophesies a time when God’s people are invited to come and find refuge “until the fury has passed by.” God’s people are securely hidden in their chambers, with the doors shut behind them. The ‘fury’ is from God himself. He comes “out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.” This is not persecution from the wicked, but judgment from God. This is not a local judgment, but something God brings upon the inhabitants of the earth in general. When is this time, when God’s people are carried away, protected from the fury God brings upon the earth? It could refer to the deliverance of the Jewish people from the fury of the Antichrist described in Revelation 12 v 12 v 13, 14. But it could also refer to the refuge of God’s people when they are caught up together with the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4 v 16, 17), and thus escape the horrific judgments God pours out upon the earth during the Great Tribulation that will immediately precede the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 24 v 21, 22; 29, 30).

### ***The redemption of Israel (Isaiah 27)***

“The LORD... will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent” (v 1) – the ultimate triumph of God ‘in that day’ is expressed in his victory over Leviathan. ‘Leviathan’ is referred to in Job 3 v 8, Job 41 v 12, Psalm 74 v 14, Psalm 104 v 26, passages that reinforce the idea of Leviathan as a mighty, serpent-like creature, connected with the sea, who resists God and will eventually be crushed by him. If Satan appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden as a serpent (Genesis 3 v 1), why not also appear as a terrible sea-dragon? Revelation 13 v 1 uses similar imagery in describing the emergence of the Antichrist, servant of Satan.

- How does this chapter express the principle underlying God’s discipline of his people (verses 7 and 8)? How does it explain his ultimate purpose? See verses 9, and 12 and 13.

“A pleasant vineyard, sing of it! I, the LORD, am its keeper” (v 2, 3) – in the days of the Kingdom of the Messiah, God watches over the ‘vineyard of Israel’ with special care. He waters it, protects it, and guards it constantly against all enemies, forcing them to make peace with him and his vineyard (v 3 to 5).

“Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit” (v 6) – this will be ultimately fulfilled during the Millennium, but if ‘abide in Christ’ now, he will care for us as his precious vineyard, and we will bear much fruit and so prove to be his disciples (John 15 v 5, 8).

“The guilt of Jacob will be atoned for” (v 9) – God shows his mercy to Israel in that their sins will be forgiven. This is ultimately fulfilled in the Millennium, when all Israel will be saved (Romans 11 v 26).

“When he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces” (v 9) – God shows mercy to his people in that he destroys their idolatrous altars and images, leaving them no option but to worship him.

“The fortified city is solitary” (v 10) – the ‘city of man’, representing the world system, will be made so desolate that it will resemble a wilderness with bare branches, useful only for firewood (v 10, 11).

Finally, God will be worshipped by his own regathered people. They will come from the nations (Assyria, Egypt), and they “will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (v 13).

*Prayer – O Lord, you have promised that you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Help us to trust in you forever, for you, Lord God, are an everlasting rock.*

*Lord, we look forward to the days to come, when Jacob shall take root, and when Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit. But help us now, each and every day, to abide in you, and to let your words abide in us, so that we may bear much fruit and so prove to be your disciples. Fill us with your Spirit, and help us to bear the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. We ask these things in Jesus’ name, Amen.*