

“YOUR GOD WILL BE YOUR GLORY”
ISAIAH 60:1-22

NIV MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 60:1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."

Saint Augustine said, "*God is the light and sound and fragrance and food and embracement of my inner man –*

- *where that light shines into my soul which no place can contain,*
- *where time does not snatch away the lovely sound,*
- *where no breeze disperses the sweet fragrance,*
- *where no eating diminishes the food there provided, and*
- *where there is an embrace that no satiety comes to sunder.*

This is what I love when I love my God."

We find Israel back home in Jerusalem complaining just as much as Israel did while in exile in Babylon. God has an answer for those complaints and an astounding picture of the new Jerusalem he wants to create in order to show his splendor to the world.

In Chapter 60 we see Isaiah tell the people about:

- The gathering around God's glory
- Recognizing the Redeemer, and
- God himself as their Glory.

Gathering Around

God's people returned to their city and tried to rebuild it and the temple, but despair and frustration set in. The prophet's words reassured the people and called them to attention. God was going to act for them. The darkness of despair and defeat would cover the earth, but God would shine his glory on them, and that light would attract the nations to Jerusalem. The people needed to be in the right frame of mind to accept them.

The nations would bring the remainder of the exiles back to Jerusalem and they would bring rich tribute to rebuild the city in all its glory. Yet the people of Zion must accept one small detail. These foreigners would also come to worship at the temple, and God would accept them.

Two small trivia from verses 6 and 7, the reference to “camels will cover your land” was about caravans bringing goods for the restoration of Israel. Ironically it was on camels that the Midianites once devastated Israel. Regarding where “the rams of Nebaioth will serve you”, Nebaioth was the firstborn son of Ishmael, a name probably preserved in the later order of the Nabatean kingdom. Nations that once destroyed Israel and carried the people into captivity would be the very nations that would help to restore Israel.

Recognizing the Redeemer

Israel would no longer have to labor to rebuild her city and temple to their former glory. Foreign nations and kings would supply the necessary financial resources and the manpower to rebuild the walls. How? God had turned away from his anger toward his sinful people. Now he would show compassion to them. Any nation that did not join in the procession to Zion would be utterly ruined, or obliterated from the earth. The temple was God's footstool and he would glorify that place. Israel, who lived in such great dread and fear of the nations who had so horribly mistreated them, would see these same oppressors come to Jerusalem bowing before Israel.

God's marvelous new day of salvation would be everlasting. Self-esteem and joy would again mark the people of Jerusalem. All this would come to pass so Israel might know Yahweh their God and be sure that he was:

- Their Savior, not their silencer;
- Their Redeemer, not their ruiner.

He remained the *Mighty One of Jacob*.

Isaiah's vision is that God is the Redeemer of his people. God knows the awful plight they have faced and the problems they still face. He has begun his work of redemption by bringing them back to their homeland from exile. He wants to continue that work of redemption by using them to be priests and witnesses to the nations. But what is the prophet saying as he talks about the Redeemer bringing redemption?

Hebrew uses a verb (*ga'al*) to speak of redemption and a participle form of the verb (*go'el*) for Redeemer. The verb's basic meaning and application is "to buy something back".

Go'el becomes a technical term in family law and functions in the case of a husband dying and leaving behind a wife without children. The closest male relative was bound by custom and law to marry the widow and raise up children in the name of the deceased man, as we see in the story of Ruth and Boaz (Genesis 30, Ruth 4). The male relative who fulfilled this responsibility was called the go'el or *redeemer*.

In criminal law a person who committed a crime against another person was responsible for paying back the cost of his crime. If the injured party for some reason was not available to receive restitution, then the nearest relative was to receive it and was called the go'el (Numbers 5:8).

God used the image of redemption to describe what he did for his people as he brought them out of Egyptian slavery and gave them freedom. This figure of the divine Redeemer becomes a central theme in the Book of Isaiah in addressing the situation of an exiled Israel and Israel returned from exile, but still disappointed. The idyllic period of redemption through the exodus soon came to an end when God's people rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit by turning to idol worship. By recalling the first Exodus, the prophet portrays future events as a new exodus, which frees Israel from slavery and restores them to their rightful, original owner.

God told his people not to fear, because as their Redeemer he would help them. He admitted that they faced the current problems because he punished them in his anger, but that moment was over, and now his compassion for them was in control.

As Israel's Redeemer, God has no equal; for no other god is like him. He rules over all the earth. As God's servant, Israel can rejoice, for God has not forgotten them; rather he has redeemed them by forgiving their sins. Their Redeemer is the world's Creator, so Israel has no reason to fear the nations and their powerless gods. Israel can raise their hurt and frustrations in prayer to God their Redeemer with confidence. And so can we.

But Israel's Redeemer was not satisfied with just any Israel. He had expectations for them, and plans for those who fulfilled those expectations. They must turn from their transgressions because, in the final chapter of world history, Israel will truly be called "the redeemed of The Lord." They will live in a land without the vicious beast of sin, but with the everlasting joy of righteousness.

Thus Isaiah anchors the end of Israel's history in its beginning. For as go'el Yahweh does not purchase strange goods; rather he regains that which has always - since the time of Abraham - belonged to him. Essentially the Redeemer buys back that which belonged to him in the first place. Yahweh lays claim to his ancient right to Israel; he makes a claim that was his because he created and chose the people and nation of Israel ... and he is their king!

God himself is your Glory

God declared that His glorious presence would outshine the sun, so that darkness would be no more. Thus the days of sorrow for Israel would end. Such marvelous new promises were possible only under one condition. The people themselves must be righteous, which is part of the order of God's universe. They had to turn away from the sins they confessed in Chapter 59. Then they would be able to claim the possession of

their land forever, without worry that an enemy might take it away or that God would again punish them for their sins.

Amos 9:14 speaks of the promise of restoration to Israel:

"I will bring my exiled people of Israel back from distant lands, and they will rebuild their ruined cities and live in them again."

God came to redeem his beleaguered people, **just as He promised**. His glory drew the nations to his city to bring rich offerings and to rebuild the ruins. His glory provided light and perfect weather for the city. He showed that his dominant side was compassion, and not anger. His goal was redemption, not destruction or punishment. He sought to establish a righteous order of peace and justice. To do so he called his people as priests to the nations with a message of hope for the poor, broken, and needy.

Although Israel as a nation refused to accept the challenge and take on the identity that the prophet gave them, God did not fail his people. Jesus of Nazareth came to this world, took up the messenger's appointed task, and brought new hope and salvation to a dark world. He now calls us as his people to take up the same mission he had and to give hope to the world's hopeless. As we do, we experience his blessings and know for sure that everlasting joy is ours. By taking up that mission we show God's splendor to the world.

God has committed himself to the future of this world, his grace will triumph permanently and universally, and the races and cultures of this world are intended to have a place of honor in God's plan. We have a reason to expect sweeping spiritual revival throughout the world, however formidable the opposition. The reason is the Word of God. Remember Genesis 12 where the gospel begins with the call of Abraham. God promises that in Christ all nations of the earth will be blessed. And He keeps his promises.

The goodness of God is of a spreading nature. Christianity is not a private preference; it's an uncontainable power for world renewal. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and light by its nature illuminates everything around. In the same way, the gospel will brighten the world.

This is not a tangent, or irrelevant point, in the Bible. This is the essence of the gospel. If we enjoy Christ at the present moment, however sincerely, but with a fear that tomorrow he might be forever defeated, would the gospel be good news? No. The gospel must, and does, announce Christ's final victory. Therefore, you can live now with a sense of personal possession in the future through the promise of eternal salvation. Whatever your life is now, you are immeasurably rich in what it will become because of the promise the Gospel brings.

Referring back to our memory verse; vs. 1 –

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of The Lord has risen upon you."

The New Testament tells us that through conversion to Christ we come *"to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem"* (Hebrews 12:22). We've joined a spiritual culture that will remake the world. Isaiah 60 has nothing to do with the city of Jerusalem in the modern state of Israel. However, it has everything to do with the New Jerusalem that the whole world will become (Revelation 21).

When God makes his presence manifest among us, we can discard all religious demagoguery as irrelevant compared with the promise He provides us. God's glory alone is what makes us compelling to the nations. Isaiah can see masses of people from all over the world migrating into the church. The whole world will be drawn on a pilgrimage to honor the church.

God has not revealed himself in any other religions of the world, but through Christ alone. Isaiah sees the implication of that. It means there is only one true culture of salvation in the world, the Christian church. He isn't saying that Christians will be the bosses and everyone else the slaves. That way of thinking belongs to the evil one. He is saying that the glory of Christ will unite the human race. The church will no longer be persecuted. The world will no longer be aggressive and hostile. The church will be the lead culture of the world. There will be no more false inferiority or superiority of one culture over another. We will be at our best in Christ, the world will hurry to be a part of it, and they will not come empty-handed.

The worship of the nations will be acceptable to God because it will be offered on his altar, which is the Cross. The nations will be true to themselves in all their fascinating human variation, and through the sacrifice of Christ their worship will beautify the house of God.

The Apostle John writes of the New Jerusalem at the end of time,

"The kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day - and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter into it" (Revelation 21:24b-27a).

The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into the holy city - human literature and music and dress and all aspects of culture, but purified and consecrated to Christ, flowing into the church, enriching everyone and beautifying the place of God's presence. No one is excluded - except those who consider themselves too good for Christ and his church.

During this past Easter weekend the Orange County Register published a guest column on the Opinion page by Betty Talbert. Ms. Talbert holds an M.A. in New Testament

Studies from Talbot School of Theology. I feel that some of her comments are consistent with our lesson in Isaiah and God's promise a restored Israel and a New Jerusalem. Allow me to share ...

"We live in a world where despair and injustice are common and rebellion is mostly self-serving. Christianity calls such rebellion 'sin,' which is rooted in a human incapacity to live up to God's good standards. Because God's goodness will not allow sin to enter His holy presence, our choice to sin against God's commands separates us from Him. Sin cuts into us so deeply that forgiveness and change seem impossible. Because each soul's wounds needed healing, God the Father sent his Son to mediate forgiveness to his children.

"Once on Earth, Jesus Christ was a rebel of a different kind. He abandoned His powerful heavenly position so He might offer us grace, love and mercy. He didn't rebel in order to gain worldly power, preferring instead to move among His creation. He came as fully god and fully man so He might relate to us, reach out to us, teach us, struggle with us, suffer and sacrifice for us.

"Christians believe that Jesus Christ's miraculous, public resurrection on the first Easter, which was prophesied beforehand, and testified to by eye witnesses, proves his ability to reconcile us to His Father.

"When those drawn to repentance by the Holy Spirit believe in Christ's sacrifice for their sins and in His bodily, historical resurrection from the dead, the prophesied promise, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33) is fulfilled. Our hearts are changed. Obedience to God's commandments becomes acts of love - the consummation of being disciplined by the Messiah.

"Living the "good life" is now an act of worshipping The Lord, not an act of self interest. Even so, we are promised that our change on Earth is only a foretaste of our eternal home, a life purchased by Christ's death and guaranteed us by the power of his resurrection."

With your indulgence, I would like to share with you one of my most precious treasures and how I came to discover it.

I have shared before that I had a very close relationship with my father. Not only did I grow up as *Daddy's girl*, my father was my close confidant and my spiritual teacher and mentor. My Dad passed 8 years ago. At the time of his passing, his wife had predeceased him by 3 years and their home was in escrow. Dad finally agreed to downsize and move to a smaller home, but he became ill over a weekend and his weakened health condition caused him to lose the battle before we were fully ready. As the

executor of his estate, I had 1 week to prepare for the funeral and 2 weeks to meet the closing of the sale of his home.

It was a daunting task to empty a large 4 bedroom home and 3 car garage filled with a life of possessions for 2 people. My step-mother's sons were not able to help and my own brother was not able either. I was totally alone in this task. The morning after the funeral, I stood in their home and burst into tears at the thought of this monumental job! Just then the door bell rang and 3 of Dad's neighbors stood there offering their help because they knew I would need it. An hour later 4 of my cousins arrived for the same reason. By the afternoon, the house was full of family and neighbors packing boxes and going through things.

In all the chaos I declared the packing up of Dad's home office and desk as mine alone. I was afraid that papers might be misplaced that I would need. Soon I found quiet time to sit at Dad's desk and put things into boxes to take to my house.

What does the top drawer of your desk look like? What do you store in it? Well Dad was no different than anyone else. Beyond pens and pencils, I found trinkets of all kinds, all evidence of Dad's interests and avocations. Way in the back of the center drawer I pulled out an old, small, and what appeared a children's Bible. Mmmm ... I never saw that before.

→ This little child's pocket Bible has become one of my most treasured possessions today. On the front inside cover it says:

→ Pocket Testament League Membership Card

I hereby accept membership in the Pocket Testament League by making it the habit of my life to read a portion of the Bible each day, and to carry a Bible or Testament with me wherever I go.

Signed: Dean Worthy, with his address

Dated: 1935 ... Dad would have been 9 years old then.

What members can do:

Show this Testament to other people.

Persuade others to join the Pocket Testament League.

Sacrifice, in order to give a Testament whenever you can.

It included a guide on How to Become a Christian, the words to 2 hymns, and the directions:

If you decide to accept Christ as your Savior, sign your name on the inside back cover.

→ On the back inside cover it says:

MY DECISION

Believing that the Lord Jesus Christ died for me –

*I now accept Him as my Savior,
I ask Him to blot out all my sins,
I will acknowledge Him before others,
And trust Him day by day.*

(Then the reader was instructed to write his name in the verse from John 3:16)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that Dean Worthy, who believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

You see, this was the covenant that God made with all mankind beginning with his covenant to Abraham thousands of years ago. And this was the commitment that Dean Worthy made with Jesus 70 years earlier. It was a promise that God kept, and a promise fulfilled. I have no doubt in my entire being about where my father is living today. He is living in the New Jerusalem. Amen.

Who could have imagined that 70 years later, a grieving daughter sitting at her father's desk would have found such comfort and promise in a little children's Bible. In my heart it is my personal assurance that God truly keeps his promises. I know He kept his promise to Dean Worthy.

And if God kept his promise to my daddy, I know that he will keep that same promise for you. And why is that? Because Yahweh himself, through Jesus our Lord, has called you to arise and shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

Amen.