

• *Salvation – the whole world should rejoice*

• *Joy in the Holy Spirit*

### 1. The new family is entirely miraculous

• *Israel had been 'barren'*

• *God's people will now grow in numbers*

### 2. The number of the people of God will dramatically increase

• *Israel must prepare for new numbers*

• *The people of God will possess whole nations*

• *The people are told not to be afraid*

• *New days of glory will come into Israel's life – new fertility from God*

### 3. A richer relationship with God will come into being

Salvation is to be accomplished<sup>1</sup>! The whole world should rejoice and the whole world may be invited to respond to what God is doing. First the people of God may rejoice. God's people are compared to a barren woman who finds that miraculously she has a family! Joy is the very heart of the life of the believer. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, but it is not to be forgotten that it is also joy in the Holy Spirit. It leads to music and praise. The life of the believer is not merely a doctrine or a theology (although that comes into it). More importantly, it is a joyful experience of a new relationship with God himself. What is there to sing about?

<sup>1</sup> 52:13-53:12

#### 1. The new family is entirely miraculous.

<sup>1</sup>*Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labour; because more are the sons of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,' says Yahweh.*

Israel had been 'barren' – quite unable to bring forth any enlargement in the true people of God. But because of the sin-bearing work of the Servant, God's people are destined to grow in numbers. Miracle-children will appear!

#### 2. The number of the people of God will dramatically increase.

<sup>2</sup>*Enlarge the place of your tent, let them stretch the curtains of your dwelling-places wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.'*

Israel must expect the new numbers and prepare for them.

<sup>3</sup>*For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your seed will possess even nations and settle in their desolate cities.'*

The people of God are pictured as living in tents (for they are, after all, children of Abraham, the tent-dweller). But not only will they be too big for the tent, they will possess whole nations!

<sup>4</sup>*Do not be afraid; for you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.'*

God hates fear. Again and again in the Bible we have the words 'Do not be afraid'. Despite centuries of sin and despite decades of painful exile and centuries of waiting for the Saviour to come, the people are to refuse to be afraid. The days of shame (Israel in the days of Isaiah) will get left behind and new days of glory will come into 'Israel's' life. She will be like a once-barren woman who now has amazing fertility. What is the source of the new fertility? God himself!

<sup>5</sup>*For your Maker is your husband – Yahweh Almighty is his name – the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.'*

3. **A richer relationship with God will come into being.** In verses 6–10 Isaiah develops the thought of the suffering wife in another way. Israel was like a woman abandoned by her husband, because of her own follies and rebellions. A marriage relationship with Yahweh had been ruined because of idolatries. But after the sin-bearing work of the Servant of the Lord, all of that will change.

• Israel is like a woman abandoned by her husband

• After the sin-bearing work of the Servant, the marriage will be restored – Israel (including gentiles) will flourish

• There will be a new covenant – like the one with Noah

• A covenant of sheer generosity

• Anger will not determine the relationship between God and His people

• The fixed relationship between God and His people will be unbreakable

• God's people will experience His love, peace and compassion

<sup>6</sup>For Yahweh has called you back as in the case of a wife left and distressed in spirit, – a youthful wife that is spurned', says 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,' says Yahweh your Redeemer.

The marriage will be restored. God had been angry with his people, but he had never divorced them. They are still his and – after the sin-bearing work of the Servant – 'Israel' (a phrase which will include gentile believers) will flourish as God's people in a greater way than ever.

A new covenant will come into being, having resemblances to the covenant God made with Noah.

<sup>9</sup>To me this is like the waters of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.  
<sup>10</sup>For though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,' says Yahweh, who has compassion on you.

There are different kinds of covenant (of law, of mutual promises among equals, of generosity). Noah's covenant was one of sheer generosity. God took the oath. In a different kind of covenant – the covenant of law – the people who have to be obedient are the ones who take the oath. Always the heart of 'covenant' is oath-taking. In the case of Noah, God took an oath not to flood the world with water ever again. Through the Servant a similar covenant will come into being. There will come the abolition of the anger of God, for the people of God. Anger will never be able to determine the relationship between God and his people. True, fatherly displeasure may still appear, but the **fixed** relationship between God and his people will be unbreakable, unshakable. It will not be abolished by God's anger against sin. Sin has been carried away in the sin-bearing death of the Servant. 'God is love' is not the whole truth for everyone all the time. But it is the whole truth determining the everlasting relationship between God and his people.

God's people will experience his unfailing love, his peace (the all-round sense of harmony and fulfilment that comes from being reconciled to God) and his compassion.



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