

Lesson 8

Isaiah 59:20-60:22

John Newton, as usual, got it right. He sang, 'Saviour, if of Zion's City, I, through grace, a member am'. There is this great Zion, the fulfilment of everything the historic Zion was meant to be and never was, the city of those saved by grace, the city of the people of Jesus. Psalm 87 glimpsed it, in a poetic, slightly enigmatic way; Isaiah caught its radiance more fully than anyone else in the old covenant; Paul saw it as the 'mother' of the children of promise in Christ (Gal. 4:26-31); Hebrews 12:22 described it as the city we now inhabit by right, the city of the firstborn, its registered citizens, sheltered under the blood of Jesus, safe and accepted in the presence of God the Judge; John was privileged to watch its eternal fulfilment in the city descending from heaven, the bride of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9-10), exclusive to those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27). 'The city' is one of the Bible's pervasive themes. In Genesis a 'city' was humankind's remedy for the divisiveness of sin and the ever-threatening world sin had created — a human organization for salvation and security. Isaiah foresaw the whole world organized into a 'global village', and called it 'the city of meaningless' (24:10), sharply contrasting with the 'strong city' of salvation (26:1-4), the city of peace and of believers. Philippi (Acts 16: 12) was a 'colony', a prized privilege in Roman days, for citizens of a 'colony' were actually enrolled on the citizens' lists in Rome, the capital itself, and, in distant Philippi, lived by and enjoyed the privileges of the capital city itself. 'Our citizenship' — Paul reminded the Philippians — is in heaven; our names are enrolled there. In our far off, earthly 'colony' we enjoy the privileges of the eternal city which is now our home, and which will be so everlastingly. We read Isaiah 60 and say — with wondering delight — these joys are my joys, these privileges mine.

Isaiah 59:15b-19 What does verse 15b tell us about human inability? What is God going to do about it?

What is the significance of the armor he is going to put on? Identify what He will do (v18) and what will be the result (19). In Isaiah 59:20-21 why is the focus on the redeemer so essential at this point? What is God promising in verse 21 and why is it significant for us?

Isaiah 59:9-10 What is the condition of society pictured in Isaiah 59:9-10. What does Isaiah 60:1-3 say will impact that condition and how will it occur?

What are the predictions in Isaiah 60:4-9? What would this mean for Isaiah's original hearers or for the community in exile? What would life in Jerusalem be like when these prophecies are fulfilled? How do they relate to life in the New Covenant?

The opposition of the Nations has been a constant theme in Isaiah. How will God change the situation according to Is 60:10-12? What might this have to say to the persecuted church today?

Isaiah 60:15-22. Clearly these verses have never been fulfilled in the history of the earthly Jerusalem, nor can they be. They must therefore be an earthly picture of the heavenly city of Rev 21:22-27. What can we learn of the glories of heaven from these verses? How should they encourage our faith and focus our service