

THE KING AND ZION

Jon Macon

In Isaiah 33:17, God told Jerusalem, “Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.” This King would be associated with the borders of Israel expanding to a far distance. This certainly appears to be a prophecy of Jesus the King.

The King in his beauty

Jesus was not physically beautiful when he was upon this earth (Isa 53:2), but he epitomized spiritual beauty as he committed no sin (John 8:46; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 2:22; 3:18), and grew to spiritual perfection (Luke 6:40; John 15:9; 17:20-26; Heb 2:10). The Lord’s church is the spiritual kingdom of Israel (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:16; 1 Pet 2:5-9; Heb 12:22-23). This kingdom of Christ spread throughout the world (Isa 2:3; Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Rom 16:25-26; Col 1:5-6,23; Rev 5:9; 7:9-14; 14:6). It was also opened to the Gentiles (Matt 12:18,21; 24:14; 25:32; 28:19; Mark 13:10; Luke 2:10,30-32; 24:47; John 11:49-52; Acts 1:8; 2:16-21,38-39; 9:15; 10:34-35,45; 11:18; 13:46-48; 14:27; 15:3,7-19; 18:6; 21:18-19; 22:19-22; 26:15-20; 28:28; Rom 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:29; 9:24-26,30; 10:18-20; 11:11-31; 15:8-19; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 2:2,7-14; 3:8,14,26-29; Eph 2:11-22; 3:1-15; Col 1:27; 3:11; 1 Thes 2:14-16; 1 Tim 2:7; 3:16; 2 Tim 1:11; 4:17; 1 Pet 2:9-12; Rev 5:9-10; 7:9; 10:11; 14:6-7; 15:4; 21:24-27; 22:2).

A quiet habitation and immovable tabernacle

In Isaiah 33:18-24, the beautiful and mighty Zion of the New Testament is contrasted with the situation facing Jerusalem at the hands of the Assyrians. The Lord said, “Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers? Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand” (Isa 33:18-19). Those in the church would meditate upon the lessons and terrible times faced by physical Zion when Assyria came against her, but such things would not be seen by the church. Instead, God said, “Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken” (Isa 33:20). This speaks of spiritual Zion, the church (Heb 12:22-23), which is the “continuing city” (i.e. eternal, Heb 13:14). It is called “the city of our solemnities,” which is literally *an appointment* (time, place, or meeting), referring to the fact that Jerusalem was the chosen place for the Jews’ assemblies (Deut 12:5-6; 16:16; 1 Kgs 11:13,32,36; 2 Kgs 21:7; 2 Chr 6:6; 12:13; 33:7; Zech 3:2). The citizens of spiritual Zion are the “general assembly and church” (Acts 11:26; Heb 10:25; 12:22-23). The church, heavenly Jerusalem, is a “quiet (literally, *secure*) habitation” (Isa 33:20). That is, the church is where we dwell in peace with God and in spiritual safety (Isa 9:6-7; 11:6-10; 32:2,17; Jer 23:6;

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(continued)

33:15-16; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33; Rom 5:1; Eph 2:12-22; Col 1:19-23), with deliverance and protection from the devil's snare (Luke 4:18; John 8:31-36; Acts 26:13-18; Rom 6:6-7,16-23; 8:1-2,21; Eph 4:8; 2 Tim 2:24-26; 2 Pet 2:18-20). And as Isaiah 33:20 prophesies, the church is truly a "tabernacle that shall not be taken down," that will never have a stake removed or a cord broken. The church is God's eternal kingdom which will never be destroyed, nor will Hades prevail against it (Isa 9:7; Dan 2:44-45; Matt 16:18-19; Luke 1:31-33; Eph 3:10-11,21; Heb 12:28; 2 Pet 1:11; Rev 11:15).

Where no galley or ship will pass

Isaiah 33:21 says, "But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." In the church, we have all spiritual blessings in Christ (2 Cor 8:9; Eph 1:3; Php 4:19; 1 Tim 6:17-18; 2 Pet 1:3; Jas 1:4; 2:5; 3 John 2; Rev 2:9), and no enemy ships will penetrate her. "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Isa 33:22). Indeed, Jesus is our judge (Matt 25:31-46; John 5:22,27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom 2:16; 14:10; 1 Cor 4:4; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1,8). He is our lawgiver (John 12:48; Col 3:16-17; Gal 6:2; Jas 1:25; 2:8,12). He is our king (Matt 2:2; 5:35; 21:5; 25:34,40; 27:11,29,37,42; Mark 15:2,9,12,18,26,32; Luke 1:32-33; 19:14-15,27,38; 23:2-3,37-38; John 1:49; 12:12-15; 18:33-37,39; 19:3,12,14-15,19-22; Acts 4:27; 17:7; Rom 15:12; 1 Cor 15:24-25; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 11:15; 17:14; 19:16; 20:4-6). And he is our Savior (Matt 1:21; 18:11; Luke 1:69; 2:11,30; 9:56; 19:10; John 3:16; 4:42; 10:9; 12:47; Acts 4:10-12; 5:30-31; 13:23; 16:30-31; Rom 1:16; 5:6-11; 10:9; 11:26; 1 Cor 1:21-24; Php 3:20; 1 Thes 5:9; 1 Tim 1:15; 2 Tim 1:10; 2:10; 3:15; Titus 1:4; 2:11-14; 3:6; Heb 2:10; 5:8-9; 7:24-25; 9:28; 1 Pet 3:21; 2 Pet 1:1,11; 2:20; 3:2,18; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:14). The present Jerusalem of Isaiah's day is described as having their "tacklings loosed," and "they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail" (Isa 33:23). They were like a wobbly, unstable ship, but God saved them from the Assyrians and "then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey" (Isa 33:23). God caused the lame (Judah) to take the spoil. Isaiah 33:24 concludes: "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." This could include the healing and forgiving of the sins of Israel in Isaiah's day, but would find its ultimate fulfillment in the New Testament by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Forgiveness of sins did not come through the blood of bulls and goats (Heb 10:1-4). Sins can only be cleansed and forgiven by the blood of Christ (Matt 26:28; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:38; 3:25-26; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38-39; 26:15-18; Rom 3:24-25; 11:26-27; Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; Heb 9:11-28; 10:11-18; 1 John 1:7,9).