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# Isaiah Series 2

## Lesson 15

### “Isaiah 62:1-12”

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**Objective** - To understand the meaning of specified passage from Isaiah for both the original audience, and what it came to mean to those that came later; especially to the Jews of the first century A. D. The passages were specifically selected because of their usage in the Gospel of Mark, either as direct quotes, or as allusions. The goal is to understand this material better in its original context, to its original audience, and in the fall to be able to examine the Gospel of Mark with a better understanding of the role of Isaiah in the theology of that Gospel and of the church.

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**Materials** - Commentaries, Journal articles, Targums, Books.

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**Procedures**

- 1. We will seek to set the basic background for the writing of the book of Isaiah.**
- 2. Choose the texts that are applicable to Mark's Gospel.**
- 3. Translate those texts from the Masoretic Text, with reference to the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Targum of Isaiah.**
- 4. I will search commentaries, journal articles, and books for understanding of these texts both to their original audience and to later Judaism, especially the Judaism of the 1st century A. D. and the early church.**

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of Zion I will not keep silent, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like the dawn, and her salvation burns like a torch. <sup>2</sup> The nations will see your righteousness and all the kings your glory, and he will call to you by a new name which the mouth of Yahweh will designate. <sup>3</sup> You will be a crown of beauty (glory) in the hand of Yahweh and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. <sup>4</sup> It will no longer be said to you that you are forsaken, and your land will no longer be called desolation; because you will be called My Delight is in Her (חֶפְצִי-בָּהּ), and your land is Married (בְּעוּלָה - Beulah); because Yahweh delights in you and your land will be married. <sup>5</sup> For as a young man marries a virgin, your sons will marry you, as a bridegroom rejoices over a bride your God will rejoice over you. <sup>6</sup> Upon your walls Oh Jerusalem, I have posted guards; all day and all night they will never be silent. You pray to Yahweh, not to be silent, <sup>7</sup> and do not give him rest until he establishes Jerusalem, the pride of the earth. <sup>8</sup> Yahweh has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not give your grain again to be food for your enemies, and the sons of foreigners will not drink your wine, for

**which you have toiled. <sup>9</sup> Because the ones gathering it, they will eat it, and they will praise Yahweh, and the ones gathering it they will drink it in my holy courts. <sup>10</sup> Pass through, pass through the gates, make clear the way for the people; build up, build up, the highway free from stones, raise a banner over the people. <sup>11</sup> Behold, Yahweh proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, “behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him and his recompense it is before him.” <sup>12</sup> They will be called, “The Holy People, The Redeemed of Yahweh:” and you will be called, “The Sought Ones, A City Not Forsaken.”**

As we continue our studies in Isaiah, this oracle opens up with an emphasis once again upon Zion. In this section, it appears as though Zion has been enduring hardship, and that Yahweh has remained silent, but now that time of silence is over and now he will no longer “keep silent.” Notice all of the first person pronouns here. This poem begins as direct speech from Yahweh himself. One of the questions that has been contemplated with regard to this part of the poem, is to whom is this addressed? Is this a promise to the people of Zion, or is it a warning to those oppressing them? The Jewish

translation in the Targum suggests that at least a part of what is being indicated here is a warning to the Gentiles. The Targum has, (62:1)

“Until I accomplish salvation for Zion, I will not give rest to the Gentiles, and until I bring consolation to Jerusalem, I will not give quiet to the kingdoms; until her light is revealed as the dawn, and her salvation burns as a torch.”<sup>1</sup> In this translation, as we have seen before, there appears to be a hostility and a desire for vindication that came about later than the prophesy, that deeply affected the understanding of this passage.

This tension amplifies concerns and injustices done to the people of Zion and the desire for vengeance rises to the surface in a way that alters the direction of the original prophesy. This same tendency is not the sole property of the Jewish people it can so often be found in the writings and actions of those that claim to be Christian. The concern shifts from the mission of God to something different, something that dims the focus and for so many appears to be the same mission, and yet it is not. Perhaps it is due to the hurt and the pain of the Jews, especially as they faced persecution after

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce D. Chilton, trans., *The Isaiah Targum*, The Aramaic Bible series, Volume 11 (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), p. 119.

persecution that their hearts hardened to other human beings and their concern diminished and with it their mission diminished and changed. In other places in Isaiah we have been told that a central part of the mission of the Jews was to be a light not only to their own people, but also to the Gentiles. Certainly the ill-treatment of the Jews cannot, and should not, in any way be excused, or diminished and certainly injustices must be addressed, but the question is, is this the mission that God gave to Israel?

Is Israel to be the hammer of God, the sword of God, or are they called to be the light of God, the beacon of God? Certainly it is not the case that God needs our help to bring justice, his arm is not too short to make that happen without any human assistance. Our part in the justice of God is not to be his executioner, his instrument of wrath, he has far better instruments than us for that. We are called upon to be his beacon, his light sat upon a hill. This was at the heart of the mission of the Jews and it is at the heart of the mission of the church today. We are called upon to allow the grace of God to soften our hearts and our countenance enough to hope and pray that the mercy of God that we have enjoyed will indeed be enjoyed by all

of God's children. Certainly there is the expectation that wrongs will be made right and that justice and peace will reign, but this is the mission of God and not the central core of our mandate. This shift in core trajectory surely reflects the hurt and pain that is felt by those who have been treated unjustly, but vengeance must be left to the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that the issue of "vindication" is what is to shine forth, but the indication here is that it is Yahweh who is the source of this vindication. True and just vindication can only come from the hand of the Yahweh. Certainly that should not, and must not, mean that we do not pursue justice, but there is certainly a difference between justice as vengeance. The indication, here in verse one, is that the vindication being spoken of, is very closely tied with justice and not with vengeance. There is perhaps a fine line between these two, but if it is a line, it must be carefully observed.

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 32:35 **Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; because the day of their calamity is at hand, their doom comes swiftly.** NRSV

Romans 12:19-21 **Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** NRSV

The word used here denoting “salvation,” or “deliverance” is taken from a word familiar to us. It comes from the word *Yeshua* (יְשׁוּעָה) and calls us to that great stream of promises that come from Yahweh and that are deeply embedded in the exodus account and the conquering of the promised land. Perhaps here, we once again, are reminded that the cry of God here is for a new exodus, a new pilgrimage of God’s people to come and be what they were destined to be, what they were created to be; to be the image of God. We are reminded of Isaiah 42:14.<sup>3</sup> It is now as if Yahweh has gone public in solidarity with Israel in order to let the nations know that the abusive and unjust treatment of his people will no be allowed to continue. There will not longer be impunity for those that abuse God’s people, there is a price to be paid. The cycle of suffering and abuse will be broken. Yahweh will show himself to be reliable.<sup>4</sup>

As we continue in verse 2, the issue of the nations, the Gentiles seeing the vindication of God is front and center. The word translated here as vindication, Zedek (צֶדֶק), is the word for

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<sup>3</sup> **For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant.** NRSV

<sup>4</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion series (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p. 220.



“righteousness.” It is a part of the name of Melchizedek (king of righteousness) and does not contain the idea of vengeance as is prominent in the Targum translation of this verse. The concept is of right rule, just, which is right and fair. This is the focus here. The idea of glory is attached to this type of righteous rule and the kings of the earth shall see the glory that comes from this righteousness. Note that I have translated this word with its more usual meaning of righteousness. Any concept of “vindication” is secondary to the concept of righteousness in this word. Certainly it can be there, depending upon the context, but it remains secondary to the primary focus. The nations will be spectators of the deep transformation that will be brought about by Yahweh.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of a new name, in verse 2, is picked up once again in Revelation at 2:17 and 3:12. There is powerful imagery associated with this new name as it is a name given by Yahweh to his people. This new name given in Isaiah will be given directly from the mouth of Yahweh (פִּי יְהוָה). Many times throughout the Old Testament, this phrase is translated as the “command of Yahweh.” This new name

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, p. 220.

will come at the command of Yahweh and this phrase is used with special frequency in association with the exodus. It will be given by God. In verse 3 the imagery is that Zion will become a “crown of beauty,” or “glory” in the hand of Yahweh. They will be a “royal diadem.”

This shall be in contrast to their former state, and their former name, which was “forsaken” (verse 4). It appears this term and been not only how they felt, but the perception of the nations about them. This term will no longer apply as it will be plain not only of the people but of the land that things have changed. The land would no longer be called “desolate.” The land would no longer be compared to a barren woman, but to a married woman. In order for us to comprehend the significance of the renaming here in Isaiah 62 we need to relate it to the social significance of renaming in Israelite culture. At verse 4, two negative connotations are replaced with two positive names. At the end of verse 12, we find that two more names are mentioned, two for the people and two for the city. In an Israelite, context renaming occurs with reference to cities, places, and people. The renaming of people is generally associated with a

change in status, or condition. In Isaiah 62, Zion is personified, so it is likely that change of name, as in the case of a person, is in regard to a change of circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

Another type of renaming is associated with the establishing, or confirmation of a covenant. This is the case, for instance with Abram being renamed as Abraham, and Jacob being renamed Israel. In such instances the names are to be seen as a sign and a guarantee of the covenant, perhaps also they should be seen as a reminder of the covenant. Another situation that gives rise to renaming is associated with marriage. At Isaiah 4:1 there is an indication that it is seen as an honor for the wife to be called by the name of her husband. Certainly, this does not mean that she no longer would be called by her own name. In the case of Abram and Jacob there is a formula in Hebrew “No longer shall your name be Abram” (לֹא יִקְרָא) Genesis 17:5; ), or “Jacob” (וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא לֹא יִקְרָא Genesis 32:28; שְׁמוֹ Genesis 35:10). In some cases it appears that the intent is that the new name should replace the old name, but in others such as Ruth 1:20 the emphasis is upon the new condition that is reflected by

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<sup>6</sup> T. David Anderson, “Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62,” *Biblica*, 67 (1986) pp. 75-80.

the new name. In such instances, it is the new condition rather than the name that is the emphasis.<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps the case that this could be the emphasis in all the cases cited including Abraham and Jacob.

There are a number of instances where Jerusalem is given a new name, such as Jeremiah 3:17; 33:16; Ezekiel 48:35 and Isaiah 60:14. In each of these instances the emphasis appears to be related to ownership, or belonging. In Isaiah 1:26 the name indicates the characteristic of the city while there are other examples in Isaiah that represent the restoration of Jerusalem in some way (58:12; 60:18). I assume it is from this verse that we get the words about “Beulah land,” in the song of that name, written in 1875, or 1876 by Edgar Page Stites. The implication of this verse, as is the message of the song, that the people of God have turned back to him in devotion.<sup>8</sup> This is something that is surely an expectation implicit in this oracle.

The question is, what light does all of this throw on Isaiah 62? The names give for Zion give her characteristics, who she is. Verse 4, uses the replacement of names formula that we saw above with regard to Abraham and Israel where there old names were replaced

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<sup>7</sup> T. David Anderson, “Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62,” *Biblica*, 67 (1986) pp. 75-80.

<sup>8</sup> T. David Anderson, “Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62,” *Biblica*, 67 (1986) pp. 75-80.

by their new name. The reference to a “new name” that we find at 62:2 is significant as this is the only place in the Old Testament where this phrase is used (שֵׁם חָדָשׁ). The reference to the kings witnessing the renaming of Zion may indicate that this is a coronation ceremony of some type. This would also perhaps explain the reference to a crown. Such an interpretation can integrate all the allusions in verses 2-3, but later on it faces major problems. In verse 2, Zion does not receive the crown in verse 3. In verse 3, Zion is the crown, and Yahweh holds the crown in his hand. The question is then, who is crowned? In order to answer this question it will be helpful to examine the various possible functions of crowns in the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup>

There is the royal crown (עֲטָרָה Jeremiah 13:18; Ezekiel 21:26; Psalm 21:3; Esther 8:15). The crown can also be a piece of jewelry, a tiara (Ezekiel 16:12; 23:42). It can be used in a figurative sense as a symbol of glory, or honor (Proverbs 4:9; 14:24; 16:31; 17:6; Job 19:9; 31:36; Lamentations 5:16). At times, the term is used figuratively in Isaiah as well (28:1, 3; 5), but it is hard for us to see this in English as

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<sup>9</sup> T. David Anderson, “Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62,” *Biblica*, 67 (1986) pp. 75-80.

the NRSV translates the same Hebrew word (עֲטָרָה) as garland. In Isaiah 62:3b the connotation of another word is “royal diadem” (צִנִּיף), but at Isaiah 3:23 the NRSV translates this as a women’s turban. At Isaiah 61:10 there is a word that is used of the crown, or garland, of the bridegroom (כִּיָּאֵר). This reference seems to be relevant to our discussion as it is in close proximity to chapter 62, and the issues of marriage seem to be shared between the the two chapters. In ancient Israel crowns were worn by both the bride and the bridegroom until around A.D. 70.<sup>10</sup>

Anderson proposes that the imagery here, being with regard to a wedding is the solution for us to interpret Isaiah 62 and to unravel the difficulties that alternate interpretations give here. In verse 3, the crown comes as a change of image and Zion is seen as the crown which Yahweh, as officiator of the marriage, places on the bridegrooms head. He believes that the reference in 4b to marriage of the land supports this interpretation. Zion is seen by Anderson as a wife reconciled to her husband in what becomes a muddled and confusing argument that helps us only a little in understanding the

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<sup>10</sup> T. David Anderson, “Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62,” *Biblica*, 67 (1986) pp. 75-80.

images here. Where do we find marriage referred to in regard to reconciliation from divorce in Scripture? Anderson ties the imagery to Hosea, but unfortunately he does not produce a compelling argument for this theory, with regard to marriage being seen as marriage. It does not seem to fit well here. When we get to verse 5 the imagery becomes even more confusing and the precision that Anderson seeks creates fog rather than clears it.<sup>11</sup> I think Anderson has given us great things to think about here, but he seems to press his ideas too far and seek more clarity and conciseness than it seems can be borne by his assertions. It seems obvious that marriage is in view here, as it is mentioned, but it is more the emotional joy of marriage that appears prominent rather than the detailed mechanics of a wedding. This may seem to be a subtle difference, but in reality it is significant. The emotional milieu of a wedding and the joy of the occasion seems to be what is in focus and not the details of a marriage.

The delight that Yahweh expresses in verse 5 is that of the unbridled passion of the bridegroom who is marrying a young

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<sup>11</sup> T. David Anderson, "Renaming and Wedding Imagery in Isaiah 62," *Biblica*, 67 (1986) pp. 75-80.

woman, I suppose in contrast to an old woman. I think the indication here is of that unabashed delight of youthfulness. There is a difficulty with the text here that leaves a part of verse 5 virtually unintelligible for us. The text literally says “so your sons will marry you.” This reading seems incongruous to the context here and so an emendation is offered by the translators of the NRSV to translate this as “your builder.” The Targum offers different emendations, one to “bridegroom”<sup>12</sup> and the other as “sons of the Gentiles.”<sup>13</sup> Both suggestions are nothing more than guesses, educated, but guesses nonetheless. What we have here is a text that clearly says “sons” but that seems incongruous. I can find no satisfactory explanation to explain that reading and changing it to “builder,” or “bridegroom,” does not help the situation. It remains a mystery.


At verse 6, Yahweh has posted “watchers” to preserve the safety of the city. The image here is of a rebuilt city with watchman on the walls of the reconstituted city. The task of the watchman is to continually remind Yahweh of the need of the city and of Yahweh’s

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<sup>12</sup> I. W. Slotki, Revised by A. J. Rosenberg, *Isaiah*, In the Soncino Books of the Bible series (London: The Soncino Press, 1983), pp. 301-302.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce D. Chilton, trans., *The Isaiah Targum*, p. 118.





obligation. They nag God in order to cause him to continue to remember. They are to continually (verse 7) remind Yahweh until Jerusalem is renowned throughout the earth. Verse 8, then goes into reminding God of his promises and this continues into verse 9 indicating that the promises will be fulfilled and the people will eat in the holy courts. The promise here is that the promises of God will be fulfilled and they are guaranteed by divine oath that the well-being of the city will be enjoyed by its inhabitants and not enjoyed by others as has been the case in the past.<sup>14</sup>

As we move into verse 10, it will resonate with verses 6-7 and it concerns the rebuilding that is to be undertaken. There is a difference here in that in verses 6-7, it is asserted that Yahweh will act decisively; here the community is enjoined to act. The summons that is given to the community is given in a series of seven imperatives, all of these summoning, authorizing, and empowering restorative activity on the part of the people. “The future depends, in various articulations, fully upon Yahweh’s reliable resilience and fully upon Israel’s committed engagement. Yahweh will give the future; Israel

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, pp. 221-223.

must enact the future.” At verse 11, a promise of Yahweh that is given in verses 8-9 is reiterated. Yahweh has promised that Zion will receive the full gift of salvation and this is reckoned as reward and recompense. This reward and recompense comes as the result of the determination of Yahweh and as a consequence of his full commitment to Israel. It is the resolve of Yahweh that opens up the future for the hope of Zion.<sup>15</sup>

The poem comes to its conclusion with a change of name for the people of Zion. They shall no longer be known as a city that is forsaken, as outcasts, as people that are not redeemed, as an unholy people. They will be called “The Holy People,” “The Redeemed of Yahweh,” the “Sought Out,” and “A City Not Forsaken.” To be the holy people of Yahweh means a people who are committed to him, a people belonging to him. “The Redeemed of Yahweh,” refers to their being brought out of bondage to the Gentiles. “Sought Out,” to being one that is looked after, cared for, and valued. “Not Forsaken,” is the term that was used in verse 4 and now this refers to one who was once shamed, rejected, and divorced, but now is fully embraced. This

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, pp. 223-224.



is a rich expression of hope sent to a people that lives in the throes of despair, in captivity, slavery, and rejected.<sup>16</sup> The message is that Yahweh cares and that he will keep his word, his promises, and that his love has endured and persevered all the hardship and onslaught of a disobedient, idolatrous people; and because of the enduring spirit of Yahweh Israel would not only survive, they will flourish as a people dedicated to him.

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, pp. 224-225.

# Synopsis

This oracle begins with an indication that though Yahweh may have been silent in the past, that situation is no longer going to continue. The nations will now see the righteousness of Jerusalem, and we have here the promise of a “new name” that comes from the very mouth of God for his people. The indications are that the people will become an honor and a crown of beauty in the hand of Yahweh. This will be a contrasting image to what they have been, and what their land has been. There is an acknowledgement here of the shame borne by the people and by the land because of the captivity and the destruction of the city. The imagery of marriage is here brought into view, and as a marriage should bring richness, honor and glory to the bride God will bring those things to the land and to the people of the land. The delight and joy that will come with this is compared to when a bridegroom marries a young bride that is pure and full of expectation for the future.

The indication, beginning at verse 6, is that Yahweh has posted guards on the walls of Jerusalem that will be ever vigilant and forever

crying out in warning to the protector of the city, to Yahweh. They nag God to fulfill his promises. Because of the hand of Yahweh, Jerusalem will become the pride of the earth. In verses 8-9, promises are made regarding the fact that those that do the work of planting and cultivating will be the ones who harvest and enjoy the bounty of their labor. The people of Israel are challenged at verse 10 to pass into the gates, clear the way, and build, build, build. The building is to become a banner of encouragement for the people calling them to recognize the source of their redemption and salvation. The oracle ends with a powerful proclamation of the blessings of Yahweh bestowed upon them as indicated by the names that they are now given. These names are more than just names; they reflect the reality of a changed situation brought about by the mighty hand of Yahweh and sustained by him with the full cooperation of the people's faithful obedience.

# Questions

1. Why do you think God is sometimes silent?
2. What does it mean when God speaks?
3. How can we distinguish the voice of God from the desires of our own hearts, or from delusions?
4. What does your name say about you?
5. Why are names important?
6. Why do you think there is so much emphasis on names here in Isaiah 62?
7. What do you think the names given here are meant to accomplish?
8. When is a time in your life when you have been particularly joyful? Why?
9. Why is joy important?
10. Why do you think this oracle speaks of the guards nagging God?
11. What do verses 6 and 7 say to us about how we should call upon God?
12. What does it mean for God to swear something?
13. Why do you think Yahweh challenges his people to rebuild a city?
14. What does God challenge us to do today?
15. What is salvation?
16. What does it mean for a people to be holy?
17. How would you describe what you think about when you think about a person being “sought” by God?
18. What encourages you the most about this oracle? Why?
19. What confuses you the most about this oracle? Why?