

Zion Shall Prosper

Key Verse: “*Thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*”
—Isaiah 49:23

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 49:14-23

AFTER THE GRAND PROM-
ise of salvation in our previous lesson, we hear complaints from Israel, here called “Zion,” that Jehovah had forsaken them. (Isa. 49:14) Throughout the remainder of this chapter, Isaiah reassures them that they will not be forgotten. They will return to their land, and their

enemies will be driven out before them. The psalmist, too, writes of God’s love for Israel, saying, “The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” (Ps. 94:14) In the New Testament the Apostle Paul makes another affirmation that Israel will not be forsaken.—Rom. 11:1,2,25-27

Israel is still beloved by God and will have a prominent part in the Messianic kingdom, but they will not be the seed of blessing. “Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles.” (Isa. 49:22) The promised seed of Abraham was to come through Isaac. (Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:17,18) The Apostle Paul declares further, however, that Isaac was merely a picture of the true seed of promise, “which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16) Thus, Israel and its Law arrangement, which traced their origins to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was not the means of salvation, but only a “schoolmaster” to bring Israel to Christ that they might be “justified by faith.” (vs. 24) Subsequent to Jesus’ First Advent, all

who are baptized into him and have faithfully “put on Christ” have become part of “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to promise.”—vss. 27-29

Isaiah’s prophecies, like many in the Old Testament, were a mystery when they were delivered, because they often spoke of future events in God’s plan which could not yet be understood. The Apostle Paul wrote, “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory,” and he continues by saying this “mystery” is revealed to us through God’s Holy Spirit.—I Cor. 2:7,9,10

As prospective members of the body of Christ, we should be keenly aware of the second part of our Key Verse: “They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” Paul testified, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Rom. 1:16) To this, Peter added, “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” (I Pet. 4:16) What faithful son is not happy and eager to praise his earthly father? How much more should we, as sons of God, gladly sing praises to him. Let us so glorify our Heavenly Father with no hint of shame.

Another thought pertaining to the word “ashamed” is that of being unwilling or restrained in our service to God because we fear the ridicule or disapproval of others. This sense of fear was a stumbling block for many Jews steeped in the traditions of their fathers, which prevented them from coming into Christ. (Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:42-44) As Peter explained, Jesus is “the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11,12) “Now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”—I John 2:28 ■