

“Zion: A Bride Gathered and Glorious for Her Returning King” | Isaiah 62

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Isaiah 62 (pp. 621-622 ESV)

Isaiah 62 is connected to the previous chapter, and just two verses before this chapter, we read of God’s people being like a bride adorned with jewels. This wedding theme continues in chapter 62 as we hear Isaiah’s vision of a wedding. It’s the greatest wedding, the wedding that all other weddings point to, the marriage between Christ and his Bride, the Church. This is *our* future wedding. And in this vision, we see some essential wedding elements that we see in weddings today: a public gathering of witnesses, the bride is given a new name, the bridegroom delights in and rejoices over his bride, and there’s a solemn vow. So look for these elements as we now read Isaiah 62.

- 62** For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet,  
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,  
and her salvation as a burning torch.
- <sup>2</sup> The nations shall see your righteousness,  
and all the kings your glory,  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
- <sup>3</sup> You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
- <sup>4</sup> You shall no more be termed Forsaken,  
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,  
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,  
and your land Married;  
for the LORD delights in you,  
and your land shall be married.
- <sup>5</sup> For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so shall your sons marry you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so shall your God rejoice over you.
- <sup>6</sup> On your walls, O Jerusalem,  
I have set watchmen;  
all the day and all the night  
they shall never be silent.  
You who put the LORD in remembrance,

- take no rest,  
7 and give him no rest  
until he establishes Jerusalem  
and makes it a praise in the earth.  
8 The LORD has sworn by his right hand  
and by his mighty arm:  
“I will not again give your grain  
to be food for your enemies,  
and foreigners shall not drink your wine  
for which you have labored;  
9 but those who garner it shall eat it  
and praise the LORD,  
and those who gather it shall drink it  
in the courts of my sanctuary.”
- 10 Go through, go through the gates;  
prepare the way for the people;  
build up, build up the highway;  
clear it of stones;  
lift up a signal over the peoples.  
11 Behold, the LORD has proclaimed  
to the end of the earth:  
Say to the daughter of Zion,  
“Behold, your salvation comes;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.”  
12 And they shall be called The Holy People,  
The Redeemed of the LORD;  
and you shall be called Sought Out,  
A City Not Forsaken.

A number of years ago ESPN ran a series of commercials titled “It’s not crazy, it’s sports.” One commercial begins with a girl in different stages of her life talking to her friends about how she imagines she’ll be proposed to one day – she dreams of a white horse, a gondola, butterflies, and words of desperate love. She then meets a guy she really likes and suspects he’s going to propose on their romantic trip to the islands. The next clip is of her and her guy at a Detroit Tigers game and all of sudden she finds herself being proposed to on the jumbotron. In response to his proposal she mutters a shocked and disappointed “sure” and her new fiancé in his great joy shouts “Go Tigers!”

Sometimes our dreams and visions of what the future will be like doesn't quite turn out how we thought it would. Every love story, every marriage has its disappointments. But this vision of Isaiah, of the ultimate love story, it's not a daydream destined to disappoint, it's a sure reality that will come and will be far more glorious and wonderful than what we could ever imagine. As we walk through this vision, we'll consider three points:

1. **Zion: A Vision of a Glorious Bride (Isa. 62:1-9)**
2. **Zion: A Vision of a Gathered Bride (Isa. 62:10-12)**
3. **Jesus: A Vision of a Returning, Rewarded, and Rejoicing King (vv. 5, 11)**

And then we'll end with *so what?*

## **I. Zion: A Vision of a Glorious Bride (Isa. 62:1-9)**

### 1. The Bride's Shame (v. 1)

Let's look now at the first nine verses and consider the vision of Zion as a glorious bride. In order to understand the bride's glory, we'll need to first understand how it emerges out of the story of her shame. As we've seen throughout the book of Isaiah, God has been calling Israel to repentance for her rebellion against him, how she's turned away from him to idols and violence and injustice. And so as we read in Isaiah 54, Israel is like a widow deserted by her husband, barren and without children, disgraced and forsaken, being crushed by the God's overflowing anger (54:8). But as God promised, his anger would be but for a moment, because he has loved his people with an everlasting love.<sup>1</sup> And so as we come to the first verse of chapter 62, we hear that Zion is still in her shame, in desperate need of righteousness and salvation. Look with me at verse 1,

**“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet,  
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,  
and her salvation as a burning torch.”**

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<sup>17</sup> For a brief moment I deserted you,  
but with great compassion I will gather you.

<sup>8</sup> In overflowing anger for a moment  
I hid my face from you,  
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,”  
says the LORD, your Redeemer.

The first question we must ask is who is the “I” speaking here? Is it Isaiah or is it the Anointed One from the beginning of Isaiah 61? Commentators differ here and neither interpretation has any major problems. If it is the Anointed One speaking, it aligns well with how we know that the righteousness and salvation of God’s people comes from God speaking his word, his gospel, into their hearts. If this is Isaiah speaking, we know that he is proclaiming God’s word, the gospel of the suffering servant, the Anointed One, and that people are saved by that message. And in one sense, because Isaiah is being inspired by the Spirit of Christ, it is true in another sense that both Jesus and the prophet are speaking here. God and God’s prophets will not be silent, they will persist in proclaiming the good news of repentance and faith, of the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ, until all the bride of Christ is saved, her shame is removed, and she is clothed in brilliant righteousness. And today we need this same kind of passionate persistence in our preachers, a commitment to not let anything silence our proclamation of the gospel. We certainly need God to raise up more preachers like Isaiah, and may he do so in and through our church.

## 2. The Bride's Flame (v. 1)

We also see in verse one the Bride’s flame. Her righteousness and her salvation are like a flaming torch, a light shining out of the darkness, a theme that we’ve heard several times in this book.

## 3. The Bride's Fame (vv. 2, 8-9)

So why is her salvation and righteousness shining forth like a flame? What’s the purpose? It’s to be a beacon to the whole world. Look at verse 2,

**<sup>2</sup> The nations shall see your righteousness,  
and all the kings your glory,**

Here we see the Bride’s global fame. The nations and all the kings of the earth will see her glory, she will shine in beautiful righteousness, a beauty and a glory foreign to and far greater than anything the world has ever seen. This is something probably similar to what Peter, James, and John witnessed when Jesus was transfigured before them – that kind of heavenly glory. A day is coming when all the world will witness and be stunned by the glory of Zion. In that day, the wealth and beauty of the rich and famous will be as mere

rags in comparison to the glory of the bride of Christ. Don't live for the riches and fame of this world – you'll be selling yourself far too short. There is a greater glory coming for those who love Christ.

The nations will see the bride's global fame, and the Bride's relationship to those nations will change. Jump down to verses 8-9. Here God gives an oath, a solemn marriage vow, to protect her from the nations.

**<sup>8</sup>The LORD has sworn by his right hand  
and by his mighty arm:  
“I will not again give your grain  
to be food for your enemies,  
and foreigners shall not drink your wine  
for which you have labored;  
<sup>9</sup> but those who garner it shall eat it  
and praise the LORD,  
and those who gather it shall drink it  
in the courts of my sanctuary.”**

The language here mimics the language of the covenant blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28 (Deut. 28:11, 33), that if Israel fails to obey God, they will experience the curse of a foreign nation eating the fruit of their land, a curse fulfilled with the Babylonians. But here God promises for Zion's interactions with the nations to change. Instead of the nations being at war with her and taking her land and her property, the Bride will be completely protected and enjoy the fruits of her land forever.<sup>2</sup> The book of Hebrews speaks of this country as the better country, the heavenly one (Heb. 11:16), reminding us that we who walk by faith are strangers and exiles on earth until God gives us that heavenly country. In that country there will be no need for police officers, military, walls, or insurance – our inheritance, our promised land, will forever be ours with no threat of loss.

#### 4. The Bride's Name (vv. 2-4, 12)

Another aspect of the Bride's glory is that she's given a new name. Read with me starting in the middle of verse 2:

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the story of the Bible we see an ongoing interplay between the relationship between God, God's people, and the land God gives his people to live in right relationship with him. When God's people break their relationship with God, they lose their land. When they become unholy, it's as if the holy land spits them out.

**and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.**

**<sup>3</sup> You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.**

**<sup>4</sup> You shall no more be termed Forsaken,  
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,  
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,  
and your land Married;  
for the LORD delights in you,  
and your land shall be married.**

In the first marriage between the first people, Adam and Eve, the woman is given that name of “woman,” and now here, in the last marriage, this royal Bride is also given a new name. Several new names, actually. No longer will she be called Forsaken or Desolate, but she shall be called Hephzibah – My Delight Is in Her, and Beulah, which means “Married.” In Christ, we are given a new identity to replace our old, shameful one. Our new identity is inseparably tied to our relationship with God, to God’s love for us. And then at the end of the chapter in verse 12, we’re given four more new names:

**<sup>12</sup> And they shall be called The Holy People,  
The Redeemed of the LORD;  
and you shall be called Sought Out,  
A City Not Forsaken.**

Each of these names speaks to the saving and work of God, the relentless pursuit of God to seek out, redeem, and sanctify for himself a people. And at the cross we see the great extent to which God pursued his bride, the great lengths he went to because he loved her. Brothers and sisters in Christ, these are your names, this is your identity, who you are. Rest in God’s love and then live out of that rest.

Zion’s future is glorious – her shame will be exchanged with salvation and righteousness, her fame and beauty will be witnessed by the whole world, her land will be safe forever, and she will be given a new name that will always remind her of God’s love for her and the extent to which he pursued her.

## **II. Zion: A Vision of a Gathered Bride (Isa. 62:10-12)**

Now we come to the second point of this message: “Zion: A Vision of a Gathered Bride.” Look with me at verses 10-11.

**10 Go through, go through the gates;  
prepare the way for the people;  
build up, build up the highway;  
clear it of stones;  
lift up a signal over the peoples.**

**11 Behold, the LORD has proclaimed  
to the end of the earth:  
Say to the daughter of Zion,  
“Behold, your salvation comes;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.”**

Before the bride appears before her husband in all her glory, she must be gathered from the ends of the earth. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the exile of Judah had scattered God’s people all around the middle east and beyond, and so there was a longing for God’s people to be gathered back in the promised land. And while this may be a prophecy in part of the return of the exiles during days of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, it is ultimately fulfilled at Christ’s second coming. In verse 10 we hear the repeated calls for people to enter through the gates of Jerusalem, for the roads to the city to be built and cleared for the coming bride. In verse 11 we see that God has sent a proclamation out to the ends of the earth to alert the daughter of Zion scattered abroad that the time of her salvation has come. Jesus taught this Matthew 24:31, saying **“<sup>31</sup> And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”** Here Jesus speaks of God’s elect, which refers not just to the Jewish believers, but to Gentile believers as well.

I think this command to prepare the way for the bride is something that we as the church today need to hear and heed. The highway to Christ is often obstructed for some people or a road isn’t even built. So practically, how do we prepare the way for the bride to be gathered? Through discipling our children, through evangelism and missions, and through the regular preaching of God’s word, people hear the gospel and come to faith in Christ. We prepare the way by calling people to turn away from their sin, the biggest obstacle on the road between them and Christ. We prepare the way by building a trusting and loving relationship with someone who doesn’t know the Lord. We also prepare the road to Christ for his elect around the world through Bible translation and distribution. As people hear God’s word in their language for the first time, they can hear of the narrow

road of faith that can lead them to God. The Bride of Christ will be made up from people of every tongue, tribe, language, and nation, and so as a church, let's do our part to make the path to Jesus more accessible to others.

So that's the vision of the glorious and gathered bride, and so now we will consider the bridegroom, Jesus, the returning, rewarded, and rejoicing king.

### III. Jesus: A Vision of a Returning, Rewarded, and Rejoicing King (vv. 5, 11)

#### 1. Returning (v. 11)

Look with me again at verse 11. The word “**behold**” is spoken again and again and again in this verse, calling Zion to look and see with her own eyes the return of Christ and his reward with him, the gathered and glorious bride. As you may remember, Jesus' name means “salvation” and so when Zion looks to see her salvation coming, she sees him.

#### 2. Rewarded (v. 11)

And he is not alone, “**his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.**” The bride of Christ is his reward, his payment in a sense, for the salvation he accomplished with his own blood. Moravian missionaries of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had a rallying cry that echoes this verse: “May the Lamb who was slain receive the reward of his sufferings!” That's the goal of missions, the mission of the Church, to give the Lamb who was slain his reward. Jesus is worthy of the cost of missions. Jesus is worthy of the cost of sharing your faith. Jesus is worthy of all of your love and devotion, for he was slain and he conquered his death and yours so that he can live with you and love you endlessly. Jesus is worthy.

#### 3. Rejoicing (v. 5)

Jesus will return soon to receive his glorious reward, his people, his bride. And he won't be a stoic king, emotionally unattached. No Jesus will be a joyful king, he will return for his bride with rejoicing. Look at verse 5,

**<sup>5</sup> For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so shall your sons marry you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so shall your God rejoice over you.**

Jesus, your God and your bridegroom, will rejoice over you. At weddings when the bride is walking down the aisle, I always make sure to look and see the face of the groom. A few Sundays ago, I got to officiate Tommy and Averil Stanoch's wedding, and it was awesome to see the joy on Tommy's face as he saw his bride for the first time. And what a wonderful thing it is that we can experience in part joys like that so that we can get a taste for the kind of joy God has for us. And think about this - God couldn't rejoice over us with his boundless joy if he wasn't forgiving, right? Apart from God's forgiveness, because of our sin, there's not much to rejoice over in us. But because God forgave us our sins and justly dealt with them by placing them upon Christ at the cross, he can rejoice over us with no hesitation. And the joy will be mutual - we will respond in joy! As the shorter catechism famously says, the chief end, the ultimate purpose for why we exist, is to glorify and enjoy God forever. That's our ultimate purpose, but a secondary purpose for why we exist, is that we might be enjoyed by God forever. God delights in not only the glory and enjoyment we have in him, but he delights in his own enjoyment of us, his people. He loves to love us.

Isaiah 62 is a profound vision of the marriage between God and his people, the ultimate love story. Where are you in this vision? We're all in this vision. You're either in the gathered royal bride, adorned and glorious, being rejoiced over by God, being given everlasting promises of God's loving protection and provision, or you're in the nations that witness her beauty and righteousness and salvation, but who don't take part in it. Where are you in this vision? Only Jesus can give you the love that your heart has always been searching after, the kind of love you were created for. All other loves in this life will disappoint you. Come to Jesus, give yourself to him, your whole self, enter into his covenant of love, turn away from your sin, and you will be saved, you will be righteous, and you will be treasured and rejoiced over forever, completely satisfied in his love.

#### **IV. So What? How This Vision Gives Us a New Vision for Our Life**

##### **1. A Call to Unceasing Prayer for Our Bridegroom's Return (vv. 6-7)**

So how should this vision give us a new vision for our life? We just can't hear something this profound and walk out of these doors unchanged or unmotivated. First, hear and heed the call to unceasing prayer for our bridegroom's return. We see this application in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> verses,

- <sup>6</sup> On your walls, O Jerusalem,  
I have set watchmen;  
all the day and all the night  
they shall never be silent.  
You who put the LORD in remembrance,  
take no rest,  
<sup>7</sup> and give him no rest  
until he establishes Jerusalem  
and makes it a praise in the earth.**

Here God is calling for watchmen, for men and women who will be committed to ever watching for the return of Christ and his bride, taking no rest in praying for God to establish the new Jerusalem and make it a praise in all the earth. You might think, *well Jesus has clearly promised that he will return, so why do I need to watch and pray for it?* Yes, God is sovereign and has his sovereign plan, but God works through means, and one means that he calls his people to again and again is the means of prayer. And in this passage and in others, he calls us not only to pray, but pray persistently, without ceasing. And so we must pray regularly for Christ's return, we must take no rest and, in a sense, give God no rest as he continually hears our cries for his Son's return. Jesus spoke of fasting while the bridegroom is away, and so to support your prayers, it may be fitting to fast every once in awhile to help you focus your prayers on Christ's return. We need him to return as soon as possible, if it be his will, but he may be delaying so that more of his bride might be won over by his sacrificial love. So let us be like watchman on the walls and take no rest in our prayers.

## 2. A Call to Boldly Proclaim this Good News to the Nations (vv. 1, 6)

Secondly, we must hear and heed the call of this vision to boldly proclaim this good news to the nations. We should imitate the passionate persistence of verse 1, the drive to not be silent, to not be quiet, but to share the good news of Jesus with people until the world sees the light of their salvation. You don't need to be a pastor or a preacher to be passionate about sharing the gospel. Far too long many of us have been silent and not sharing the hope we have with those around us. Far too long we've been timid and let people live in darkness. For some of you, it's time to finally have that conversation with the person you're thinking about right now. For some of you, it's time to get some training in

evangelism or missions. For some of you, it's time to learn how to define and explain the gospel. For some of you, it's time to be more consistent and focused in teaching your children about Jesus. For some of you, it's time to support that missionary or ministry you've been learning about. We all tend towards apathy when we experience resistance with people or when we see how pervasive the darkness is in this world. But let's combat apathy and timidity with persistent prayer. That's what the apostle Paul did. In Ephesians 6, he gives the Ephesians a prayer request, **"To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel"** (Eph. 6:18-19). If Paul needed prayer to boldly share the gospel, I think we do too. Let's pray right now for that boldness and for Christ to return and make our faith into sight.