

Immense forgiveness

Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

Isaiah 44:21-22

As we move through these later chapters of Isaiah's prophecies, beginning with the glorious fortieth, the broader ramifications of the coming kingdom, its sovereign Messiah, and its extensive reach to the peoples of the earth are intermixed with its origination in God's promises to Abraham, through Israel, and his promised seed. The "servant" of these chapters, as able to be seen with New Testament hindsight, moves between its representation of the Israelite nation, or the Christ, and/or sometimes both. In the midst of the many facets of these longer-term prophecies of the days far beyond the time of Hezekiah, when Isaiah completed this writing, the theme of redemption continues.

In the context of this chapter, as the LORD addresses His chosen servant Jacob, and Israel, He calls to those in verse three who are the thirsty, that "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." The significance of such a promise at the time of its writing can only be ascertained through acknowledgment of the sordid history of this nation, as a whole and in its divided parts. From their very beginnings under the leadership of Moses unto Isaiah's time they had vacillated, as a whole or in parts, in and out of the ways that God had commanded them for their own happiness. This chapter moves on to again remind them of the utter insanity of idolatry, into which they had often fallen, to call them back once again to forsake such folly for the one and only living and true God. To such a nation, He announces the provision of His immense forgiveness, that their transgressions against Him can be, yea have been, blotted out, just as a thick cloud cannot be penetrated by human sight, upon their repentance and return to the Redeemer.

In reviewing such a promise, we can understand its extension beyond just that nation, to the isles of the Gentiles, to whom their Messiah would also bring redemption, even to provoke them to jealousy (Romans 11:11), under the new covenant announced by Isaiah, and later Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31). For those of us now living with access to the light of His New Testament, let us be thankful for the immense forgiveness offered to them and to us through the blood of His covenant. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).