

## ***The Least of Them Shall Become a Clan***

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Isaiah 58-66

In the final chapters of Isaiah, one can find a fertile ground of wonderful poetic prophecy. The poet sings to a people living in captivity in a foreign land hundreds of miles from their homeland. The enemy has destroyed their fortified cities, their capital Jerusalem, razed their temple, captured and carried off most of their people, and left the country to grow up and lie in ruins. God has judged them a faithless spouse and turned them over to their own devices for their honor, their spiritual life, and their destiny, or so they think.

Suddenly, the prophet begins to sing, “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” [Isaiah 60:1] At the end of this poem in verse 22b the prophet proclaims, “...The least of them shall become a clan...” Just how can this be? What is going on here? What in the world is God up to now? How in the world can a people judged unfaithful, sinning at every turn actually play a role in what God purposes to do? The final nine chapters of Isaiah, with a look back into the most familiar passage from Micah, will help us to find some answers.

First, we can come to understand that the people of God [faith/believers] do play a role in history, God’s *heilsgeschichte* (German for ‘salvation history’). And secondly, true religion and real spirituality make a difference in how the faith/believer lives his life in the here-and-now. Thirdly, the prophet looks beyond his day and our day unto the final days. We should not be surprised to catch a vision of the people of God playing a role in the consummation of the ages, in the end time.

These three factors mean that redemption, mission, and eschatology are vitally related to one another in God’s scheme of things. If we interpret these prophecies using Jesus Christ as our criterion we can see God’s redemptive purpose, the pilgrimage of the nations, and God’s consummation of history. Therein lies the following trilogy: God calls us to faith/belief; God empowers us for mission; and God uses our lives in His grand scheme of history until the end. The prophet saw God calling His people back to Him. He saw God providing them with power and authority of a kind that they had never really known or realized. And he saw God using such a people for His redemptive purposes.

Let us consider what can and does happen to people to change them into those who can make a real difference in this old sin-sick world. Just why and how does “...the least one...become a clan...?” Such a study is just one of several marvelous lessons that can be gleaned from these wonderful poems.

God has always called forth those who faith/believe Him to play a redemptive role in history. Notice some phrases in chapter 58 that the prophet used to describe a real fast that would be approved by God. “Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them; and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” [Isaiah 58:6-7] We hear so much about what God has promised to do for us. When will we hear the prophetic call of what God expects us to do for others and the world? It is not popular, but it is Biblical!

The pattern is repeated in verses 9 and 10: “Then you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil; if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday....” It is not popular, but it is Biblical!

Isaiah 59:14-15 contains an observation that applies to our world. Notice how accurately it applies to our modern world, even the United States and the State of Texas. “Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance, for truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled.” If we are going to play a redemptive role according to God’s scheme of things some dramatic change has to take place. God has to do something! And He has!

“And He will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord.” [Isaiah 59:20] God got personally involved as Redeemer. Paul wrote, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself...” [2 Corinthians 5:18-19] Through Christ we can and must play an active role in the pilgrimage of the nations. Then will be fulfilled the prophesy, “...see, they all gather together, they come to you...” [Isaiah 60:4] Question: Does the world see enough of what God is doing in our lives and our churches that they come seeking us out?

God wants to strengthen the hands of His people for the conquest of love. The greatest thing that God can do for a believer is to give him someone to win and enlist. The greatest thing that God can do for a church is give them a lost community and a lost world to serve and win! Now that is not popular; but it is Biblical! We like to talk about the prophets. But we do not want the prophets talking straight and real **to us!** We cannot expect to catch on to the promises of God if His call to service does not catch us!

Up to this point we have considered redemption and the call to effective living in our own day. Now we can turn our attention to the role we as God’s people shall play in the consummation of the ages, in *eschatology* [Greek for ‘word about last things’]:

The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness  
shall the moon give light to you by night,  
But the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God  
will be your glory.  
Your sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself;  
for the Lord will be your everlasting light,  
And the days of mourning shall be ended.  
Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess  
the land forever.  
They are the shoot that I planted, the work of my hands,  
so that I might be glorified.  
The least one shall become a clan,  
and the smallest one a mighty nation.  
I am the Lord; in its time I will accomplish it quickly.

Isaiah 60:19-22

(See Revelation 21-22-27)

God calls us to play a redemptive role in our day, throughout the world, and unto the end of the ages. God has promised us great blessings. The prophets spoke of wondrous things. As the given title to this lesson says, “Get Real!” The prophet Micah is the one who brings us back to reality and puts our feet on solid ground. “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” [Micah 6:8] One could easily make a case that some Christians and their churches only talk about God as a problem solver and a purveyor of special privileges and blessings. The prophetic word calls for us to get on with the task of becoming that *clan* that even the least of us can become. Now that ‘ain’t’ popular! But it is Biblical!