

## What is Zion in Isaiah 40-66? John Hepp, Jr.

*This inductive study shows that many promises in Isaiah Part II can be ultimately fulfilled only to ethnic Israel. Except as noted, all biblical quotations are from the NIV. The term the LORD represents Hebrew Yahweh, the true God who made a covenant with Israel. Isaiah II refers to chapters 40-66.*

Many of God's people have found strength in Part II of Isaiah, which is chapters 40-66. Those chapters build a monument of majestic Hebrew poetry, glowing with awesome beauty and comforting with powerful promises. Can any child of God read the following, for example, without being assured and strengthened?

Those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.  
(Isaiah 40:31)

Indeed, many godly people have admired such promises in Isaiah II and applied them to their own lives. It is often appropriate to do so. Even the New Testament makes special applications of the words or principles of some Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of biblical history, the apostle Paul said, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us" (1 Cor. 10:11).

Yet, it is not true, as some say, that "every promise in the Book is mine." Some are only for other people. God's Word is not my personal grab bag of blessings. Perhaps I can piously apply a promise. But I cannot supersede God's original meaning—invalidate it, cancel it, or diminish its importance. What He meant to do, He will surely do. So my most important question is not What does it mean to me? but What did God Himself mean? And my most important application is to relate to the plan He revealed. In other words, What did God originally intend by His promises in Isaiah 40-66? and For whom did He make them? The one just cited, for example (40:31), was in response to the nation called Jacob/Israel complaining in captivity (40:27). A related promise, often cited and applied, was later directed to the same nation: He would accompany His beloved through the waters and the fire (43:1-2).

God's promises in Isaiah II are most often related to His graciously rescuing a "lady" in distress. That lady is the mother city often called Zion, an ancient name for a "mountain" on which Jerusalem was built (Isa. 8:18; 10:12; 24:23; 37:32) and used for the city itself (33:20; 60:14). An apt title for the whole section is "Zion Redeemed." Does this mean that God would restore and

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Matthew 2:15 says that Hosea 11:1 was "fulfilled" by what happened to Jesus. Yet Hosea 11:1 was not a prediction but history: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Hosea was recalling historical fact—that God rescued His nation from Egypt in its childhood. What does Matthew mean by citing Hosea's words? That there is another aspect to the same principle, namely, that Jesus recapitulated the history of the nation. However, Matthew's use of it does not cancel the original statement. Likewise, New Testament "fulfillments" of Isaiah do not cancel their original meaning. (See a similar example in Matthew 2:18.)

glorify Jerusalem as described? We will survey many prophecies in Isaiah II, giving samples, trying to determine what God meant. Whatever He really meant is what He will do.

At the end we will compare our findings to relevant evidence in the New Testament. Some interpreters follow the reverse procedure. They first propose their own understanding of certain New Testament passages, then try to make Old Testament prophecies agree with them. Their procedure tends to confirm their theology and cancel the clear meaning of many prophecies.<sup>2</sup> Instead, we should be diligent to determine what God said and loath to give it up.

Since most of the prophecies in Isaiah are given in Hebrew poetry, their meaning is not always literal. Yet, their basic ideas are repeated enough to be obvious. In fact, the poetry helps interpret: the subject or promise is often illuminated by synonymous material in paired lines. Powerful promises, no less real for being poetic. Many obvious meanings, far more important than our personal applications! I will arrange my findings as answers to the following questions, with a summary for each set of answers. After that I will give my final conclusions.

### **Questions to Be Answered about Zion in Isaiah 40-66**

1. By what other names is this troubled Zion labeled?
2. How is Zion related to the LORD?
3. What has been Zion's general past history?
4. Why is Zion in trouble? (reasons for God's discipline)
5. By what process did the LORD punish Zion?
6. With what results did the LORD punish Zion?
7. With what principles will/does the LORD rescue Zion?
8. By what agencies will/does the LORD rescue Zion?
9. What will be Zion's spiritual condition after she is redeemed?
10. What will be Zion's material condition after she is redeemed?
11. What will be the world's condition after Zion is redeemed?

### **Conclusions & Considerations**

## **Questions to Be Answered about Zion in Isaiah 40-66**

### **1. By what other names is this troubled Zion labeled?**

Since Zion is the figure for a mountain/city, the Hebrew language treats it as feminine. However, she has the same essential meaning as several other figures that are masculine. That fact first becomes evident in the introductory chapter 40, which announces the themes for Isaiah II. The first theme is the message of comfort which is often directed to Zion (e.g., 40:9; 41:27). In 40:1-2, however, it is directed to "my [the LORD's] people," identified as the Jerusalem whom the LORD has finished punishing for her sins. The same message of comfort

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<sup>2</sup> Such interpreters often take refuge in the fact that God's truth has been revealed progressively. They are sure it has moved toward their viewpoint. They also believe that clear passages take precedence over obscure ones. But they usually consider their own proof texts clear—and those that seem to disagree, obscure.

is said to be for Zion=Jerusalem in 40:9.<sup>3</sup> In verse 10 it is passed to the towns of Judah. Thus, Isaiah 40 treats the LORD's people, Jerusalem, and Zion as basically the same. That equivalence is seen elsewhere. For example, in chapter 41 God's people are called Jacob /Israel in verses 8 and 14 and Zion/Jerusalem in verse 27. Here is a list of sample passages that answer this first question:

- a. My (the LORD's) people=Jerusalem (40:1-2; 41:27; 51:16-17)
- b. Zion=Jerusalem (40:9; 41:27; 52:1, 2; 62:1; 64:10; 66:8-10)
- c. Zion=Israel (46:13; 60:14)
- d. Zion=Jacob (59:20)
- e. Zion=the LORD's nation (66:8-9)
- f. Jacob=Israel (40:27; 41:14; 42:24; 43:1, 22, 28; 44:1, 5, 23; 48:12)
- g. Israel=my (the LORD's) servant=Jacob=descendants of Abraham (41:8; 51:1-2)
- h. the house of Jacob=the house of Israel (46:3-4; 48:1-2)
- i. the house of Jacob=my (the LORD's) people (58:1)
- j. They had lived on the land the LORD gave to their ancestor Jacob. (58:14)
- k. Israel=my (the LORD's) servant (41:8; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:1; 48:20)
- l. my (the LORD's) people=my inheritance (47:6; 63:17)

To summarize: The troubled Zion who will receive the promised comfort, is identified various ways. She is, for example, (a) the capital city Jerusalem, (b) the descendants of Abraham, and (c) Jacob/Israel, whom the LORD had chosen as His people and had punished.

## 2. How is Zion related to the LORD?

The LORD is her God (41:10, 13, 17; 48:1, 2). Idols cannot compare to Him (40:18, 21, 28; 44:6-20; 45:5-6, 14-22; 46:5-7). They cannot produce evidence of their wisdom and power, as He can (41:21-24). They require much care and effort to be created, made stable, and carried (46:1). But the LORD has made, upheld, and carried the house of Jacob since birth—and will continue to do so (46:3-4). Here is a list of sample passages that describe Zion's God, the LORD:

- a. He is sovereign—no one can frustrate Him. (43:13; 45:17)
- b. He created all things. (40:12-14, 26; 42:5; 43:7; 44:24; 45:7, 9-12, 18; 48:13; 51:13a; 66:2)
- c. He created Israel, to praise Him. (43:21; 44:2; 51:13a; 64:8)
- d. He is the Holy One of Israel. (41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; et al.)
- e. He is Israel's king. (41:21; 43:15; 44:6)
- f. He is Father to Israel, His sons. (43:5-6; 63:16; 64:8)
- g. Israel is His nation of witnesses. (43:10, 12; 44:8)
- h. He predicted the future for Zion. (41:22-27; 42:9; 43:9; 44:7; 46:10-11; 48:3-7)
- i. He rules forever from heaven. (57:15; 66:1)

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<sup>3</sup> It is unclear whether the message of comfort is given **to or by** Zion/Jerusalem in 40:9. NIV has "You who bring good tidings to Zion...to Jerusalem." KJV has Zion/Jerusalem passing on the message: "Zion, that bringest good tidings...Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings." The latter is more likely.

To summarize: Zion belongs to the LORD, the true God, Creator, and Ruler of everything—particularly of Israel. In contrast to helpless idols, He created Israel to give witness of Him, sustained them, and predicted their future.

- 3. What has been Zion's general past history?** As the LORD's people,
- a. They are descendants of Abraham and Sarah. (41:8; 51:1-2)
  - b. They have lived in Egypt, from which the LORD has redeemed them. (43:16-17; 51:9b-10; 52:4a; 66:11-14)
  - c. They briefly possessed His holy place, now trampled by those not His people. (63:18-19)
  - d. They have been oppressed by Assyria and Babylon. (47:5-6; 52:4b)

To summarize: Zion represents the LORD's people descended from Abraham. He redeemed them from Egypt to live in the Holy Land, and later had Assyria and Babylon punish them.

- 4. Why is Zion in trouble? (reasons for God's discipline)**
- a. This house of Jacob is stubborn, disobedient, and treacherous from birth. (48:1-8; 63:17; 65:2)
  - b. This people is the LORD's blind and deaf servant. (42:18-20)
  - c. She/he has sinned against the LORD. (40:2; 42:21-25a; 43:22-24; 50:1-2; 59:1-15)
  - d. Jacob/Israel did not sacrifice to the LORD. (43:22-24)
  - e. He falsely claims to love the LORD and His city. (48:1-2; 58:2-14)
  - f. He fasts and observes the Sabbath, but does so selfishly. (58:3-14)
  - g. They persecuted the godly to death. (57:1-2<sup>4</sup>)
  - h. They violated ceremonial laws, for example, by eating pork. (65:4; cf. 66:3,<sup>5</sup> 17)
  - i. Though they fasted, they kept on oppressing others. (58:3-7)
  - j. They practiced ritual religious sex and even sacrificed their children. (57:5)
  - k. Jacob/Israel pays no attention to the LORD's commands, which would have brought peace (includes prosperity) and many descendants. (48:18-19; cf. 66:4)
  - l. In spite of the LORD's often rescuing them, Israel rebelled until He became their enemy. (63:9-10)
  - m. No one would take the LORD's offer to save. (50:1-2; cf. 51:17-20)
  - n. Their watchmen are blind and selfish. (56:10-11a, 11b-12)
  - o. The house of Jacob trusts in idols instead of the LORD. (48:3-6a; 57:6-13a; 65:3-7, 11)

To summarize: Although the LORD has shown her mercy and has warned her, Zion has only pretended to honor or obey Him. Instead, she is rebellious, idolatrous, and wicked.

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<sup>4</sup> 57:1-2. Here I follow the reading by NET Bible: "Honest people disappear, when no one minds that the godly disappear because of evil."

<sup>5</sup> 66:3. NIV states four comparisons in this verse, adding the words "is like" each time. However, the Hebrew simply says, "one who slaughters a bull, one who strikes down a man." This may simply describe contradictory behavior, as the last two lines affirm. The NET Bible agrees, changing the second "one" to "but also."

**5. By what process did the LORD punish Zion?**

- a. In anger the LORD has handed over His people. (42:24-25; 47:6; 51:17, 20, 22; 54:8; 57:16-17; 60:10; 64:7, 9)
- b. He divorced Zion and sold her children for their sins. (50:1)
- c. Zion/Jerusalem/the LORD's people was punished by godless nations for free. (52:2-5a)
- d. He has let Babylon punish His people/His inheritance. (47:5-6)
- e. Babylon has showed no mercy. (47:6b)

To summarize: The LORD in anger turned Zion over to godless nations like Babylon. They punished her for free and showed no mercy.

**6. With what results did the LORD punish Zion?**

- a. His sacred cities, even Zion and Jerusalem, are a desert, and the temple burned. (64:10-11)
- b. Zion is bereaved and barren, exiled and rejected. (49:19-21; 51:19; 54:1)
- c. She is in constant terror and prison. (51:11-14)
- d. She has become loot—trapped, imprisoned, plundered. (42:22-25a; 49:9a)
- e. Even when consumed, they did not understand. (42:25b)
- f. He complains, "My way is hidden from the LORD." (40:27; cf. 49:13-16)
- g. Even in captivity Jacob/Israel has not called on the LORD but burdened Him with sins. (43:22-24; 57:17; 65:1-5)
- h. The LORD made them stray and remain stubborn. (63:17; cf. 64:7)
- i. He seemed oblivious to His people's suffering. (64:12)
- j. For the sake of His reputation the LORD refrains from destroying Israel. (48:9-11; 65:8-9)

To summarize: Zion lost her homeland, temple, and possessions. She became an abject and still unrepentant spoil of war; yet, the LORD will preserve her.

**7. With what principles will/does the LORD rescue Zion?**

- A. What the LORD will do
  1. He acts out of undying love, to comfort Zion. (40:1-2; 49:15-16; 51:3a; 60:10)
  2. He fulfills His prophecies. (40:6-8; 44:26; 55:10-11)
  3. He fulfills His covenant with David. (55:3-4<sup>6</sup>)
  4. He frees the prisoners. (51:14)
  5. He gives His nation Zion amazing rebirth surely and in a moment. (66:7-9)
  6. He does so even though they remain stubborn and sinful. (46:12-13; 57:17c-19)
  7. He is blotting out her sins. (43:25; cf. 44:21-22)
  8. He will redeem her at no cost to her. (52:3; cf. 55:1-2, 7)
  9. He will redeem His servants but not the impenitent ones. (65:13-14)

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<sup>6</sup> "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my **faithful love** promised to David" (55:3, NIV). "Faithful love" represents Hebrew *khasde* ("sure mercies" in KJV), here in apposition to (referring to the same as) the "[new] covenant." NET Bible understands this verse differently. It considers *khasde* not as apposition but as analogy (similar but not identical), which it indicates by adding the words "just like" before it.

10. He will destroy the wicked. (66:17-18, 24)
  11. He will punish Babylon for being merciless with His people/His inheritance and for her pride. (47:4-15; cf. 43:14; 51:21-23)
  12. This new thing will make His chosen people forget the past. (43:18-19a; cf. 48:6b-8; 54:4; 65:16b-17)
- B. What His people must do
1. They must keep praying for Jerusalem's redemption. (62:6-7; 64:1-2, 7)
  2. They must flee from Babylon. (48:18-20; 52:11-12)
  3. Jerusalem/Zion should rise out of dust to put on garments of splendor and be enthroned. (52:1-2)
  4. The hungry and thirsty are invited to come be satisfied at the LORD's table. (55:1-3a)
  5. They should do what is right and observe the Sabbath. (56:1-2; 58:13)
  6. They should humble themselves. (57:15; 66:2)
  7. They should free the oppressed. (58:6-10)
  8. The wicked person must repent—forsake his own thoughts and ways and turn to the LORD. (55:6-9; 57:13b; 59:20<sup>7</sup>)

To summarize: Though Zion does not deserve the LORD's grace, He will forgive her, restore her, exalt her, and punish Babylon. She must pray, repent, and respond to the LORD.

## 8. By what agencies will/does the LORD rescue Zion?

### A. The LORD Himself

1. He will act, as in the past, because there is no one else. (51:9-10; 59:16-17; 63:7-9, et al.)
2. He will judge. (42:13-16; 66:16)
3. He will destroy Zion's enemies. (49:25-26a; 59:18-19; 63:1-5)
4. He will give the enemies the wine of His anger. (51:22-23; 63:5b-6; 66:15)
5. He will cause a highway to be built and will accompany them across the desert. (40:3-5, 10-11; 49:11; 62:10-11)
6. He will provide water and other needs for them as they return. (43:19b-20; 48:21; 49:10)
7. He will bring Jacob's descendants from all over the world. (43:5-7; 49:12)

### B. The LORD'S Servant

Note: This Servant is sometimes identified with Jacob/Israel but distinguished in 49:5-6, et al.

1. The LORD has chosen and raised up His Servant to save Israel. (42:1; 61:1-3?)
2. The Servant will at first be rejected by Israel. (53:3-4<sup>8</sup>)
3. He will suffer greatly. (52:14-15)
4. The LORD will lay on His Servant the iniquities of unbelieving Israel. (53:4-8, 10-12)
5. The Servant will bring back to the LORD Jacob (the tribes) and Israel. (49:5-6a, 8b)
6. The Servant will also be a light for the Gentiles. (49:6b)

<sup>7</sup> 59:9-15 is a statement of repentance, probably from the prophet only.

<sup>8</sup> "Who has believed our message...?" (53:1). "Message" here does not refer to what they preach but to the report delivered to them and not believed at first. See 53:2-4 and 52:14.

7. He will rule over the world. (42:1, 3, 4; 51:4-5; 52:13-15; 55:4)
- C. Cyrus<sup>9</sup>
  1. The LORD will raise up Cyrus to freely rebuild His city and set His exiles free. (44:28; 45:13)
  2. Cyrus will do the LORD's will against Babylon. (48:14-15)
- D. Israel & the Nations (see also 11A)
  1. The LORD makes Israel His threshing sledge to thresh the mountains (nations) and crush them. (41:15-16)
  2. The nations will bring Zion's children home. (49:22-25; 60:4, 9)

To summarize: The LORD Himself will restore Zion, using His suffering Servant, King Cyrus, Israel itself, and the nations, as agents.

## 9. What will be Zion's spiritual condition after she is redeemed?

- A. Relation to the LORD
  1. Zion will know the LORD. (60:16)
  2. The LORD will return to Zion. (40:3-5, 9-11; 52:8)
  3. He will be her sun and moon. (60:19-20)
  4. He will restore Zion to His everlasting favor. (54:7-10; 61:8b; 62:12)
  5. His people will realize that the LORD predicted their future. (52:6)
  6. They will realize that He restored them. (52:6)
  7. They will recognize that He has renewed His reign. (52:6-7; 60:16)
  8. They will become the LORD's priests. (61:6a)
  9. They will be secure. (60:18)
  10. Zion's people will reveal the LORD's glory. (60:21; 61:11)
  11. Zion's glory will be due to having the LORD as husband and Redeemer. (54:4-8; 62:2-5)
  12. She will be called "My delight is in her" and her land, "Married." (62:4-5)
  13. Her children will all be godly. (54:13; 60:21)
  14. The LORD's covenant will be to keep His Spirit and His words forever in their mouths and their children's mouths. (59:21)
- B. Other Primarily Spiritual Benefits
  1. The LORD will give them the blessings of the everlasting covenant made with David, leader of the nations. (55:3b-5)
  2. He will create new heavens and a new earth. (65:17)
  3. He will make Jerusalem a delight and its people a joy, with no weeping. (65:18-19)
  4. They will have eternal joy in Zion. (51:11-14)
  5. They will have complete prosperity ("peace, peace"). (57:19)

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<sup>9</sup> Many years after Isaiah, King Cyrus came on the scene and did what was predicted. He brought Israel back home, enabling preparation for the coming Servant/Messiah. Yet, Israel could not receive its eternal inheritance until the Servant later made full redemption possible (Heb. 9:15). And Cyrus's judgment of Babylon was only partial and typical, to be completed later (see Rev. 17-18). Did the prophet Isaiah think that Cyrus would give more than a giant step toward the final restoration? Possibly so (see 1 Peter 1:10-12).

To summarize: After being redeemed, Zion will truly know and honor the LORD—and forever enjoy the blessings promised to David.

### 10. What will be Zion's material condition after she is redeemed? (See also 11A.)

#### A. Zion's Splendor (Glory)

1. She will be clothed with beautiful clothes, adorned. (52:1; 54:11-12; 60:17; 61:10)
2. She will be enthroned. (52:2-3)
3. The LORD will make Zion and her environs like the Garden of Eden. (51:3)
4. Zion/Jerusalem will have glory and a new name bestowed by the LORD. (62:1-3, 12b)
5. The LORD is granting His salvation to Zion and His splendor to Israel. (46:12-13)
6. Her glory will be an attraction for all nations. (60:1-5, 9)
7. Nations will bring their wealth to her. (60:5-7, 11, 16; 66:12)
8. Like the new heavens and earth, her name and descendants will endure forever. (66:22)

#### B. Zion's Children & Living Conditions

1. The LORD will multiply His chosen people. (49:20-21)
2. He will restore them to their land forever. (49:8; 60:21; 65:9; cf. 58:12; 61:4)
3. He will redeem and glorify (marry) her land. (62:4)
4. He will bless them materially. (65:10, 23)
5. In Jerusalem He will give long, secure, full life, and His presence. (65:20-24)
6. He will provide Zion many children with her in the holy land. (49:17-22; cf. 51:1-3; 54:1-4)
7. They will be brought by other nations, from afar. (60:4, 8-9)
8. Zion's sons will possess ("marry") her. (62:5)
9. They will conquer other nations.<sup>10</sup> (54:3b)
10. They will rebuild the ruined cities of Judah. (54:3c; 61:4)
11. She, not her enemies, will benefit from her labor and use its benefits in worship. (62:8-9; 65:21-22)
12. They will get a double inheritance and joy. (61:7)
13. No more violence nor ruin. (54:14, 17; 60:18)
14. No more sorrow. (40:1-2; 60:20; 65:19)
15. Zion/Jerusalem will provide abundance for all who love her. (66:10-13)

To summarize: After being redeemed, Zion will forever exhibit the LORD's glory and enjoy His overflowing abundance in the Promised Land. She will rule over and bless other nations.

### 11. What will be the world's condition after Zion is redeemed?

#### A. Worldwide Conversion & Judgment

1. Survivors of the final battle will proclaim the LORD's glory to the nations. (66:19)
2. All nations will recognize that the LORD delivered and blessed Israel. (49:26; 52:10; 61:9, 11; 62:2a)

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<sup>10</sup> 54:3b. This interpretation does not follow the NIV ("your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities") but the NET Bible ("your children will conquer nations and will resettle desolate cities").



3. They will honor Israel because of her God. (55:5; 60:13-14)
  4. They will bring Jews to the capital as an offering to the LORD. (66:20)
  5. They will rebuild Zion and bring their riches to honor her and the LORD. (60:5-17; 61:6b)
  6. They will be Israel's servants. (45:14; 60:12-14)
  7. Every knee will bow in homage to Israel's God. (45:23<sup>11</sup>)
  8. The LORD will select some from the nations to be priests and Levites. (66:21)
  9. Even eunuchs and foreigners who choose the LORD's covenant and keep His Sabbath will take part in His temple with regathered Israel. (56:3-8)
  10. All mankind will continually come to worship the LORD. (66:23)
  11. The temple will be a house of prayer and sacrifice for all nations. (56:7; 60:7)
  12. The wicked will all be judged like the tossing sea and cast into unquenchable fire. (57:20-21; 66:23-24)
- B. Restoration of Nature
1. Even animals will live together peacefully and harmlessly. (65:25)
  2. When the LORD leads Israel out in joy, nature itself will acknowledge His work. (55:12-13a)
  3. Restored nature will be an everlasting sign of the LORD's glory. (55:13b; 44:23)
  4. The new heavens and new earth will endure forever. (66:22)

To summarize: Gentiles will fully cooperate in bringing Zion's children home and in worshiping Israel's God. Nature will be restored and freed from the curse forever.

### Conclusions & Considerations

(The abbreviation "q" refers to one of the earlier "questions to be answered.")

1. Zion must be identical to some extent with ethnic Israel. Therefore, it is not the present church nor something in heaven.
  - a. It has been guilty of long-term sin against the LORD, has been punished for its sin, and is to be restored.
  - b. Its past history and geography are identical with those of ethnic Israel. Isaiah relates its people to Egypt, the Holy Land, and Babylon, not to heaven or other parts of the earth.
  - c. It is to be restored to the land promised to Jacob (q. 1), which it formerly occupied.
  - d. Two terms used synonymously with Zion—*Israel* and *Jacob*—always seem to refer elsewhere in Scripture to ethnic Israel.
  - e. For the LORD's prophecies to prove His divinity as claimed (q. 2), Zion must be historic, ethnic Israel. He predicted specific sins, punishments, and deliverance, which would be untrue of any supposedly spiritual Zion.
  - f. The early step of deliverance through King Cyrus would be meaningless for a later Zion.
2. When Zion is restored to Jacob's land, that land will also be glorified (q. 10B).

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<sup>11</sup> The NIV translates 52:15a as "so will he sprinkle many nations." If the verb means *sprinkle*, the verse may affirm that the Servant will cleanse many nations. The NET Bible, however, translates as "startle."

3. Interpreters must take into account a significant limitation in some prophecies of Isaiah II (and similar prophecies). This was the assumption that Messiah would come only once. After He came and was rejected, however, it was revealed that He would come again (Matt. 11-13). Between His two comings would be a gap that must be “inserted” in some passages. For example, there is a gap between Messiah’s humiliation in Isaiah 52:14 and His final exaltation in 52:15. This also implies that some passages will be fulfilled twice for the two comings. For example, 40:3 was applied to John the Baptist (in Matt. 3:2 and Mark 1:3; 40:3-5 in Luke 3:4-6), but there will probably be another such “voice” to prepare for His Second Coming.
4. New Testament distinctions between heavenly Zion and earthly Zion do not cancel promises for earthly Zion. Consider evidence from three passages.
  - a. Galatians 4:21-31 constructs an allegory about Abraham’s natural and spiritual families. The natural descendants are like Ishmael, who was born from the slave girl (Hagar). She represents Mt. Sinai (that is, the law-covenant made there) and earthly Jerusalem. In contrast, the spiritual descendants are like Isaac. He was born according to promise, from the free woman (Sarah), who was formerly childless. She represents the heavenly Jerusalem (and by implication, heavenly Zion) and its new covenant. Her children, as we see by comparing Galatians 4:26 to 3:28-29, come from every nationality. And only they are Abraham’s heirs, though the natural descendants now persecute them. This allegory might seem to cancel future hope for earthly Jerusalem or ethnic Israel. But it does not, because God has promised to transform natural descendants into spiritual descendants.
  - b. Hebrews 11 and Hebrews 12 both refer to earthly and heavenly Zion/Jerusalem. Nearly everything in 11:8-19 is about Abraham and his faith.<sup>12</sup> Four of those verses (vv. 13-16) include his godly descendants. “All these people...were longing for a better country—a heavenly one,” and God “has prepared a city for them” (vv. 13, 16). That is “the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God,” for which Abraham was waiting (v. 10). Hebrews 12:22 further identifies that city: By faith we “have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.” So God will fulfill the faith of Abraham and his descendants with a heavenly city. But that is not the whole story. God had made Canaan, which already included Zion/ Jerusalem, the “promised land” (11:9). When He “called [Abraham] to go to a place that he would later receive as his inheritance” (11:8), Abraham went there, not to heaven. As “heirs with him of the same promise” (v. 9), his descendants were promised the same country. Since “they did not receive the things promised” (v. 13), has God canceled the original promise? Of course not. He will certainly grant it by combining the heavenly with the earthly.
  - c. Revelation 21-22 describes the new Jerusalem descending to earth from heaven. That will be the eternal city referred to in Hebrews 11 and 12. Again, this passage does not cancel any future for earthly Jerusalem but shows its transformation.

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<sup>12</sup> The twelve verses (11:8-19) all center on Abraham and his faith. Seventeen verses center on other individuals.

The Zion in Isaiah seems to have both aspects. Its past and present history are earthly; it is guilty of great sin and is being severely punished. But its future is heavenly; it is destined to be glorified and eternal. The Old Testament sees that coming glory—and that of its citizens—only partially and obscurely.