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Zion Consoled
49: 14-26



In the first half of the chapter we saw the final return of **the Jews** to **Zion**, or **Jerusalem**, from **the Messiah's** perspective. Now, in these verses we see **the Servant's** message of final salvation and restoration of **all Isra'el**, even as the armies of the antichrist are bearing down on **them**. Even though these events are in **the far eschatological future**, **Isaiah**, as a **prophet**, was writing about **them** during his day. **Zion** is not just **the city** of that name, it is its **people**. **Zion** is not simply **their** home; it is **their** name, **their** identity. If **Zion** is ruined, so are **they**. If **Zion** weeps, so do **they**. And **they** will never be fully **themselves** again until **Zion** is restored to **its** former glory. It is hard for us to appreciate such a complete identification of **a people** and **their city**. There is nothing quite like it in our own experience. No earthly city has the same significance for us that **Zion** had, and have, for the people of **the LORD**.[189] In the second half of the chapter we see the final restoration of **Isra'el** from **her** perspective. **She** is being consoled by the fact that the promises of **49:13** also include **her**, and that **she** is not **forgotten.**

The recurring theme in this passage is **God's** attempt to overcome unwillingness on **Israel's** part to believe what **ADONAI** says. This is particularly evident in the contrast between **49:13** and **14. God** has promised **comfort and compassion**,

but **the people** say that is not true because **ADONAI** had **forgotten them**. **ADONAI** promises that one day in **the far eschatological future**, when **the Servant** sets up **His** Messianic Kingdom, **they** will be in **the Land** and restored in glory. But it was not easy to wait on **the LORD** to fulfill **His** promises, especially with the armies of the world bearing down on **them**. This was especially true in regard to the promises of **the Suffering Servant**, who would defeat the power of sin and bring the Kingdom of **God** to the earth. It took about seventy years from the time the first captives were taken in 605 BC until the first return in 538 BC, but it took hundreds of years for **the Servant** to come. It has been more than two thousand years since **Isaiah** wrote **his** book, and still we wait for **the Messiah** to return. **The LORD's** timing is not our timing. Down through time, from Abraham's day to **Isaiah's** day, to today, there have been **believers** who never saw the promises of **God** fulfilled. **They** died before **Jesus** was born, or before **He** returns in glory. So, **they** waited in faith. And when **Yeshua** was born there were people like **Anna** and **Simeon** who were ready to recognize **Him** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Au – Jesus Presented at the Temple**). **They** were at the end of a long line of believers who had waited confidently, and in the end, **their** faith was **not disappointed (49:23).** If you wait in faith for **Him** you will not be **disappointed, for ADONAI is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for Him (30:18b)!**[190]

Part of the reason that some of **the Jews** had lost hope was that **they** could not really believe in **the LORD's** love for **them**. No doubt there were a number of different types of thinking in that group. **First, some frankly thought that God had treated them unfairly.** After all, **the people of Judah** weren't *that* bad, and there were **people** around them who were at least as bad, maybe worse **(Hab 1).** Also, if **their** parents had been so bad, as bad as **the prophets** insisted **they** had been, then **ADONAI** should have punished **them** and not their "innocent" children. So, this group would say, "If **God** loves us so much, we shouldn't be in this mess at all."

Others admitted that God had treated them fairly. This generation was just as unfaithful as the preceding ones had been, and **the LORD** had given **them** exactly what was coming to them. Being as bad as **they** were and having failed **God** so miserably, **they** could not imagine that **God** could ever love a people such as **them**.

Finally, there were those who said, in effect, "So what!" These **people** looked at **their** circumstances and concluded that the situation was hopeless.

Whether **they** had gotten into this mess fairly or unfairly was beside the point. The point was that there was no way out. Thus, **the LORD** could *say* **He** loved **them** all **He** wanted, but it simply would do no good.

Those same groups of people exist today. You may know some of them. **To those who believe they have been treated unfairly, God calls them to trust Him and rely on Him in the midst of their pain.** Undoubtedly there will be individual **Jews** who truly do not deserve to be killed by the antichrist. Just like there are those today who do not deserve to be born into an abusive family, be poor or without an absent father. These individual **Jews** might be **people** of faith who are living in obedience to **the LORD**, yet this terrible thing will happen to **them**. This would be the case with **Dani'el**, **his** three friends, and **Ezeki'el**. But the question in that circumstance is not, "Why?" and hold **ADONAI** hostage for an answer. Rather, it is, "What now?" and look to **God** for the strength and wisdom to go on. For them, **the LORD's** declaration of love will be **their** lifeblood as **they** seek to cope with the *unfairness* of life. The fact is that we are part of a much larger picture than our own actions, and if circumstances do not turn out as we might wish, that is no indication that **ADONAI** does not love us or care for us.

The second group longs for God's love and forgiveness but simply believes that the LORD cannot forgive them for what they have done. This is sometimes a reverse form of pride: "What *I* have done is too much for **the LORD**." But more often, it is an inability to forgive oneself: "**God** can't love me; I am just so worthless. Nothing I say or do is worth anything." They think to themselves, if I am this disappointed in myself, think how infinitely more disappointed **ADONAI** is. Sometimes **God** *is* disappointed with us, but that does not change the fact that **He** loves us unconditionally. In the humiliation of admitting that ours is not the worst sin in the world and that our disappointment in ourselves is not the issue, there is a possibility of realizing that **the LORD** *wants* to forgive us if we will only let **Him**. In receiving that forgiveness, there is finally the possibility of forgiving ourselves.

The situation of the third group is much like that of the second group. If God's love is to be experienced, it must be surrendered to. The pride that says, "My situation is hopeless," is the one that refuses to believe **ADONAI** is greater than anything this world can throw our way. What **God** asks for is the opportunity to try. **He** asks us to test **Him** in faith, not doubt, and to allow **Him** to show us the love **He** has for us and to demonstrate that love can conquer any obstacle it meets. **His arm** is not **too short to ransom** us, nor does **He lack the strength to rescue** us **(50:2).**

To all of these, **the LORD** says the same things as **He** said 2,700 years ago; **He** can no more forget us than **a mother** can **forget her** nursing baby **(49:15).** And we have even more evidence of that truth than **Isaiah** did, for when **He** speaks of the names of the faithful being **engraved on the palms of My hands (49:16)**, we think of the nail scars in **the hand**s of **His Son**. When **He** has done that for you, how could **He forget** you?[191]