

A. Introduction

1. Forsaken; Forgotten

2. How the people of God in exile felt^A

B. Zion, Forsaken and Forgotten

49:14

1. But Zion said^B

2. The names Jerusalem and Zion^C

3. God's people often feel forsaken

C. God says, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'^D

49:15-16

1. God better than 'Mom'^E (15)

2. Graven in God's palms^F (16)

D. Mother Zion Will Be Emptied and Replenished

49:17-21

1. Emptied by her enemy's departure (17b, 19b)

2. Replenished (17a, 18)

3. Filled to overflowing (19a, 20-21)

E. Conclusion

1. Forsaking; Forgotten

2. God's love shown through His Son

^A Psalm 74:1, 80:4-5; Lamentations 1:1, 2:1

^B Isaiah 49:1-13

^C Psalm 48:2, Hebrews 12:21-22

^D Hebrews 13:5

^E Romans 1:31, 2 Timothy 3:3

^F Nehemiah 2:3, Revelation 21

-{1} **Isaiah 49:14-21. Zion Replenished**

A. Introduction

1. Forsaken; Forgotten

- a. a blue SUV came along the country road and stopped in a lonely spot. The door opened and a little, white dog hopped out. It stood there, waiting expectantly for the man to get out with the leash to take it for a walk. But the blue SUV drove away. The dog whimpered and looked after it. Forsaken.
- b. in the early 1970's a young basketball player was the token representative from French Lick in southern Indiana on the Indiana high school All-Star team. They were playing in the Kentucky-Indiana All-Star games. He was put in the second unit of the Indiana team. Even so, in the first game at Louisville, when the second team went on the floor, then Indiana pulled away to win what had been a fairly close game. The same thing happened in the second game at Indianapolis in the first half with the second team turning the game around so Indiana left at the half. In the second half, after the first team had played for a while, the second team was put in again – all except this young player from French Lick who sat forgotten on the bench; Larry Bird, one of the all-time greats in the NBA; forgotten. -{2}.
- c. forsaken; forgotten; these are depressing and discouraging experiences.

2. that is how the people of God in exile felt forsaken and forgotten by the Lord

- a. The Levitical singer, Asaph, asks this question in Psalm 74:1, 'O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?'
- b. and again in Psalm 80:4-5, 'O LORD God of hosts, How long will You be angry with the prayer of Your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears, And You have made them to drink tears in large measure.'
- c. while Jeremiah weeps over the desolated city of Jerusalem in Lamentations 1:1, 'How lonely sits the city That was full of people! She has become like a widow Who was *once* great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces Has become a forced labourer!' and later in Lamentations 2:1, 'How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion With a cloud in His anger! He has cast from heaven to earth The glory of Israel, And has not remembered His footstool In the day of His anger.'
- d. what Asaph and Jeremiah recorded as fact, Isaiah foretells as prophecy:

- B. Zion, Forsaken and Forgotten 49:13
1. 'But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me."'
 - a. in the preceding verses in this chapter
 - (A) Messiah speaks through Isaiah to tell of His calling by the Lord as His Servant, Israel (v 3)
 - (B) a Servant who will restore Israel and bring salvation to the Gentiles (vv 5-6)
 - (C) a Servant who will Himself be for a covenant for God's people (v 8)
 - (D) a Servant who will be a faithful shepherd, the Good Shepherd, to His people (vv 9-10)
 - (E) and because this faithfulness of God to His people, the universe is commanded in verse 13, 'Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted.'
 - (F) But Zion doesn't feel comforted; Zion feels forsaken and forgotten
 2. let me just mention something here about the two names: Jerusalem and Zion
 - a. geographically speaking, in Scripture they both represent more or less the same place
 - b. both, like the temple that lay within them, are spoken of as God's abode on earth
 - c. but sometimes there is a subtle difference in the way the two are used in the Bible
 - (A) Jerusalem is primarily the city proper, the capital of the kingdom of Judah
 - (B) Zion is the city of David, the Messianic city, where God fulfils His promises to His people; it is where God's community dwells in relationship with their Lord God; it is 'Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion in the far north, The city of the great King.' (Psalms 48:2)
 - d. Zion becomes, therefore, a natural picture of the people of God of all ages; those who are ruled by the great King, Messiah
 - e. being used of the church of Christ in that sense; in the NT in Hebrews 12:21-22a, 'But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven ...'; and in our hymns:
 - (A) as in 'Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion city of our God,' by John Newton
 - (B) and again in 'We're marching to Zion,' by Isaac Watts, who also wrote these words of going to worship:

How pleased and blest was I To hear the people cry: Come, let us seek our God today!

Yes, with a cheerful zeal We haste to Zion's hill, And there our vows and honours pay.

(C) or these words by Rev Thomas Kelly (1769-1855) of Christ's ultimate victory:

ZION'S King shall reign victorious; All the earth shall own His sway;

He will make His kingdom glorious; He will reign through endless day.

f. so we, as part of God's people in an antagonistic world can sympathise with the Jewish church in their feelings

3. Many times God's people feel forsaken

a. many times they echo these words: *The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me.*

b. in the OT, the Psalmist, David and others, often voice these words, 'How long?' – how long will God permit wrong to triumph as in Longfellow's poem:

And in despair I bowed my head: "There is no peace on earth," I said,

"For hate is strong and mocks the song Of peace on earth, goodwill to men."

c. a cry which must go up from the persecuted church even of our own day, as many are martyred, with no apparent concern by the more privileged churches in the west

d. it is a cry of some of us as individuals: *The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me.*

(A) as we face difficulties that seem so insurmountable to us

(B) and it doesn't help that unbelievers cast back our words in our faces, 'your God has forsaken you'

e. but God has a message for His people when they feel so dejected and discouraged...

C. God Says, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee' (Hebrews 13:5) 49:15-16

1. God is even better than mom, verse 15: '*Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.*'

a. every word here speaks of the intimate relationship between a mother and her child

(A) it is a nursing child, a child completely dependent upon mom for sustenance; while I have got up nights to walk a crying child, much more often have I just been able to roll over in bed and leave the problem to mom; and mom took care of it

(B) it is the son of her womb; that child was a part of her own being in a way that none of us men –

paternity leave notwithstanding – can ever know

- b. and yet even moms sometimes fall short of this ideal; unwanted children are abandoned or aborted. It is part of what the Bible speaks of in Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3 as being 'unloving,' or, more expressively in the AV, 'without natural affection.' This is the Interim newspaper, a paper with a strong sympathy for the Roman Catholic church; and it is faithful in speaking against abortion, euthanasia and other popular immorality of our times. We are in an age where many people live, and our governments enact laws, that are 'without natural affection.'
 - c. But God does not forget. God is still on the throne and He never forsakes His own.
 - d. Queen Elizabeth's mother, the 'Queen Mom' was aged 101 when she died in March, 2002. The public mourning showed what a special place she had in the heart of Britons. Much of it was traced to the way she stood by and supported her husband, King George VII – as well as the British people– during the darkest days of World War II. While enemy bombers rained destruction on England's largest cities, London lived largely underground at night, trying desperately to hold out against Hitler's plan to conquer their nation. A rumour circulated that the princesses, Elizabeth Margaret, then just little girls, were going to be sent abroad for their safety. When she was asked about this, the Queen Mum's reply was famous: 'The girls can't leave unless I leave and go with them, and I can't leave unless the King leaves. And the King will never leave.' –{3}.
 - e. our King, the Lord God, never leaves His people
2. because they are graven in God's palms, verse 16, *Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.*
- a. God is closer than close to His people; He is as close as His own Being to them; He dwells with them and He lives in them
 - b. How can he forsake or forget His people
 - c. they would be distressed, even as Nehemiah, in fear and trembling, expressed it to king Artaxerxes: '... *Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?*' (Nehemiah 2:3)
 - d. God sees continually Zion's walls; now broken down; but in His plans, complete and restored – read it in Revelation 21!

- D. Mother Zion Will Be Emptied and Replenished 49:17-21
1. Zion is addresses as a woman; she will be emptied by the departure of her enemy
 - a. verse 17b: `... Your destroyers and devastators Will depart from you.'
 - b. verse 19b: `... And those who swallowed you will be far away.'

 2. she will be replenished
 - a. first by her sons' return (or, as the word can also mean, 'builders', and perhaps both are in mind), verse 17a: `Your builders hurry' or `your sons hasten'
 - b. so her eyes are to be turned from being downcast to being uplifted in hope, she is to deck herself with her returned people, with the same rejoicing and with the same expectation as a bride decks herself with ornaments, verse 18: ``Lift up your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. As I live," declares the LORD, "You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride."''
 - c. God says, `As I live' – that is a solemn oath on His part that what follows will indeed come to pass

 3. Zion, desolated and diminished by the exile, will be filled to overflowing
 - a. not only are her sons returned, her people, but the number is increased by others, so that they no longer will fit within her walls: verses 19-21: `For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land— Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants, ... ²⁰ The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears, "The place is too cramped for me; Make room for me that I may live *here*." Then you will say in your heart, "Who has begotten these for me, Since I have been bereaved of my children And am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; From where did these come?''
 - b. Mother Zion, though bereft and barren, will yet have children: to the Jewish church will come through Messiah the Gentile church

 4. men disdain the church and people of God as expressed in one verse of the hymn, The Church's One Foundation

Though with a scornful wonder Men see her sore opprest,

By schisms rent asunder, By heresies distrest,
Yet saints their watch are keeping, Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping Shall be the morn of song.^{—{4}}.

a. all appearances to the contrary God, has not forsaken His people

E. Conclusion –

1. Forsaken; Forgotten

- a. later that day, the blue SUV came along that road again. In the front seat this time sat a young boy, his face wet with tears. The little, white dog was still there, just a few feet away from where he had been left. At the sight of the boy getting out of the car, the dog, wagging its tail furiously, ran to meet him. Gathering the dog in his arms, the boy jumped back in the car. The blue SUV drove away.
- b. the son's love went out to bring back the one who had been forsaken.

2. we can rejoice in God's love through His Son in our closing hymn 'O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go'

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In these studies in Isaiah, I commend, and have primarily used, these commentaries:

- a. K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament by Keil and Delitzsch, 1890; and specifically, the volumes on Isaiah by Franz Delitzsch. This has also been republished at various dates by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan
- b. EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans
- c. EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, particularly from Volume 6, Isaiah, Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland; © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan.

2. Condensed from '*The Peace that Christ Gives*', Kerux illustrations #3008, augmented from other sources.

3. Adapted from '*The King Will Never Leave*,' by Ron Hutch craft (#4029) – Kerux illustrations #17327

4. *The Church’s One Foundation*, verse 3, Samuel John Stone (1839-1900), Sankey’s Sacred Songs & Solos, #229