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1. It is a message of ...

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^A Psalm 24:3-5

^B Ezekiel 16:23-24

^C Revelation 21:1-3, 22, 27

^D Romans 2:29, Colossians 2:11

^E Isaiah 51:9, 17; the Tares: Matthew 13:24-40

^F Isaiah 51:23, Ephesians 2:5-6

^G Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:17

^H Colossians 2:13-15, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26

^I Hebrews 12:22-24

A. Introduction

1. Being Clean

- a. If you don't like to wash your hands, don't ever become a doctor or a nurse. I mean, you have to wash your hands a lot! Scrubbing up is routine procedure for people in the medical profession. I don't think any of us wants to be opened up by some doctor who hasn't washed his hands all day! More than one person has probably made it through major heart surgery only to die from a staph infection picked up in the hospital. It's avoiding that kind of thing that is at the heart of a hospital's insistence that healers and caregivers get really clean before they touch you. If they carry infection, they can do a lot of damage.
- b. It isn't just doctors and nurses that have to be clean for what they do. It's a requirement God makes of anyone who is to worship Him in spirit and truth.—{2}.
- c. that is what David had to say in Psalm 24:3-5, '3 Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive a blessing from the Lord And righteousness from the God of his salvation.'
- d. this 52nd chapter of Isaiah is chock full of truth – we can only cover a small part in our message – and one of them is that God's people are to be wholly cleansed; and so, our sermon title
- e. this theme is raised in the very first verse, '...O Jerusalem, (you) the holy city; For the uncircumcised and the unclean Will no longer come into you.'

2. Prophetic fulfilment of this promise

- a. takes place in three different epochs
- b. the first epoch was the return from Babylon
 - (A) Isaiah has been preaching about Judah's exile and restoration, and so that return was a fulfilment
 - (B) Ezekiel 16:23-24 describes what Jerusalem was like before the exile: 'Then it came about after all your wickedness ('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord God), that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square.' ... shrines and high places to Ba'al and Astoreth

- (C) in returning from that exile, the Jews abandoned their fascination with these gods of the surrounding nations
- (D) but such fulfilment was only partial, for the profane of both Jew and Gentile continued to walk in Jerusalem; unclean and uncircumcised in the flesh and uncircumcised in the heart, even until this present day; it was only partial; it was only typical, pointing to the other two epochs
- c. of the last epoch of fulfilment we read in the book of the Revelation after the final judgement taking place in the new Jerusalem:
 - (A) Revelation 21:1-3, 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them"' ... Revelation 21:22, 'I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.' ... then the final fulfilment of Isaiah's words, Revelation 21:27, 'and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.'
- d. and the other epoch of fulfilment is that taking place today, as names are added by faith to that 'Lamb's book of life.'
 - (A) it is taking place in the spiritual Jerusalem, in the church of the gospel times, the church of Jesus Christ as described in Hebrews 12:22, 'But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, ...'
 - (B) it is taking place as lives are cleansed from their sin through the power of the blood of Jesus Christ shed upon the cross of Calvary
 - (C) so that it is God's people, those who are in Christ, that are the true circumcision
 - (1) "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." (Romans 2:29)
 - (2) "and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;" (Colossians 2:11)
 - (D) and these are the wholly cleansed people of God, the truly circumcised, that can enter the spiritual

Jerusalem

- B. Let God's People Awake Isaiah 52:1-2
1. God's Response to Prayer
 - a. the prayer of Isaiah and the faithful remnant is recorded in Isaiah 51:9, 'Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces, Who pierced the dragon?'
 - b. God's first response to that prayer is given in Isaiah 51:17, 'Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk from the LORD'S hand the cup of His anger; The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.'
 - (A) awake from the drunken-like state that punishment has caused in you
 - (B) because God is about to bring that punishment to a close; now,
 - c. God's second response is now given in verse 1, 'Awake, awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; For the uncircumcised and the unclean Will no longer come into you.'
 - (A) awake from a dirty and dusty state – that describes Israel in captivity; that describes a man or a woman living outside of faith in Christ
 - (B) what Israel could not do in its own strength – cleanse themselves of their impurity – God now promises to them
 - d. for the most part, Jewish interpreters and Christian interpreters alike see this as still in the future – Jesus told a parable that the kingdom of God – God's people on earth, His church – is like a field in which a farmer planted wheat, but in the night, the enemy came as sowed tares – a poisonous weed – alongside the wheat. The farmer, a picture of God, leaves the tares (planted by Satan) in the field until the time of harvest (of judgement) when they will be readily distinguished and destroyed; so the ultimate cleansing takes place then
 - e. but in the meanwhile, the true church within the visible church, are to array themselves in the beautiful garments of Christ's righteousness
 2. Israel in Captivity is instructed in verse 2, 'Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem;

Loose yourself from the chains around your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.' – the same Hebrew words can be translated 'O captive Jerusalem' or 'sit down, O Jerusalem' and both meanings fit the context

- a. a Jerusalem, now in captivity, is instructed to remove the humiliation of that captivity – the dust – and its bonds
- b. a Jerusalem, reduced in circumstances by the oppressor, as a few verses back in Isaiah 51:23, '... your tormentors, Who have said to you, "Lie down that we may walk over you." You have even made your back like the ground And like the street for those who walk over it.' are now told to stand up in the anticipation of their deliverance, and in place of prostration on the ground, sit upon a place of honour and dignity
- c. even so, Christians are reminded that God 'even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:5-6); because,

C. God Will Deliver Isaiah 52:3-6

1. God has been watching His people, they have been under His sight; verse 3, 'For thus says the Lord, "You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money."' (Isaiah 52:3) – the fact that Israel has been exiled does not mean that they have ceased to be His people
 - a. the figure of the marketplace is used: there was no price paid by Babylon when the Jews were taken captive, and God needs to pay no price when He returns them back to the land of promise
 - b. in the next verse, they are reminded that this is nothing new: 'For thus says the Lord God, "My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there; then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause."'
 - (A) Israel had gone down to Egypt as guests, and had been made slaves – but they were still God's people
 - (B) so God redeemed them at great cost to Egypt and from that day they were His people
 - (C) thus the oppressors since then, as typified by Assyria, had no right to do so; but despite all outward appearance to the contrary
2. God has not abandoned them
 - a. they are still His people, and he is concerned over their suffering: verse 5, "Now therefore, what do I

have here," declares the Lord, 'seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?' Again the Lord declares, "Those who rule over them howl, and My name is continually blasphemed all day long."

- (A) God looks at the situation of His people, and asks, in effect, 'What shall I do?' – that's the idea of the opening question
- (B) Babylon had no just cause against Judah; Babylon was but God's tool to reprimand Judah
- (C) Babylon howled or shrieked in their cruel treatment of the Jews
- (D) and in particular despised or blasphemed the Name of Israel's God as being utterly without power
- (E) and these two things together – His people's plight and the honour of His Name – bring about His work of redemption

b. so His people shall know, verse 6, 'Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, "Here I am."'

- (A) the people of God will know His Name – God's Name is His self-revelation to His people of His nature and His relationship to them; who He is – and in God's salvation they find that His word is true, His promise is true, He is who He says He is.
- (B) the people of God will know His Presence – 'Here I am' or 'Behold me' – or, as we read in Revelation 21:2, 'He will dwell among them'

D. This is the Gospel Isaiah 52:7-10

1. verse 7: 'How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"' – it is a message of

- a. peace (Shalom) – not simply the cessation of hostilities between two warring parties – although that is included as Jesus Christ is our peace, the one who removes our sin, the cause of God's wrath upon us – but rather a complete wholeness, a spiritual health in our relationship to God
- b. good (Tobh) – you may have heard the Jewish blessing, *Mazel Tov*; this is the good news of a blessing, of happiness, of God's goodness to us
- c. salvation (Yeshuah) – it is the message of redemption, of deliverance, of rescue

2. verse 8: 'Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices, They shout joyfully together; For they will see with their

- own eyes When the Lord restores Zion.’ – the watchmen upon the towers spread out away from Jerusalem see the messenger of good news approaching, and like the old semaphore, relay it from one to another until it reaches the eager listeners in Jerusalem – it is a message of
- a. joy – they sing out with ringing cries of joy
 - b. restoration – the Lord restores Zion; how? the words can be equally well translated, the Lord returns to Zion and the two are the same
3. verse 9: ‘Break forth, shout joyfully together, You waste places of Jerusalem; For the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.’ – for the now ruined Jerusalem – destroyed by the enemy, by Babylon there is now a message of
- a. consolation (comfort) – for the Lord has taken pity upon His people
 - b. redemption – the the Lord has released his people from their slavery and bondage
4. verse 10: ‘The Lord has bared His holy arm In the sight of all the nations, That all the ends of the earth may see The salvation of our God.’
- a. God is here pictured as a warrior, who bares his arm to the shoulder in order to engage in battle against the enemy
 - b. His holy arm = power and this is an answer to the prayer of 51:9 which we read previous
 - c. His holy arm = Person of Christ
 - (A) “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Hebrews 1:3)
 - (B) “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:17)
 - d. and so this deliverance is a revelation to man and puts a lie to the blasphemy of a world that despises our one true God
5. now these verses were true for Israel in their return from their captivity in Babylon:
- a. for them this was a time of peace, of blessing, of salvation, of joy, of restoration, of comfort, of victory over their enemy

- b. but that is but typical of the peace, the blessing, the salvation, the joy, the restoration, the comfort, the victory that is found in Christ, 'When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.' (Colossians 2:13-15)
- c. and that now taking place in this epoch of the gospel church, but looks forward to its final fulfilment, 'then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.' (1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

E. This Message Changes Lives Isaiah 52:11-12

1. 'Depart, depart, go out from there, Touch nothing unclean; Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, You who carry the vessels of the Lord. But you will not go out in haste, Nor will you go as fugitives; For the Lord will go before you, And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.'

2. The Jews in Captivity

- a. this was fulfilled as Cyrus sent them home in peace along with the temple vessels
- b. these ones are exhorted to leave Babylon ... but only a relatively few did – others had settled and made their home there
- c. but there was a remnant among them who desired to serve God with all their heart; we find the record of them in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah; we find the record of them in such people as Elizabeth and Zachariah, of Anna and Simeon, of those following Jesus in His ministry in the NT
- d. yet there were others – the priests that needed renewed cleansing in Nehemiah's and Ezra's time, the Levites that were reluctant to return; the Pharisees and scribes who placed great religious burdens on men, the priests of Christ's time who put the Son of God on trial and condemned Him – for whom this cleansing was only external, and whose circumcision was only of the flesh and not the heart

3. But to the Christian

- a. there is promised and there is given the Holy Spirit to reside within; and He effects the cleansing before God
- b. let me reread that verse from Hebrews, and what follows: '[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 to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant ...](#)' (Hebrews 12:22-24a)
- c. this is why we preach Christ, and Him crucified, that men, women, children be prepared for and enrolled in heaven.

F. Conclusion – through Christ you can be wholly cleansed and stand before a Holy God

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AV Authorized (King James) Version

NAS New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)

NIV New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society

NKJV New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;

EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans

K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch

Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. Adapted from ‘The Cleanup Imperative’ by Ron Hutchcraft, Kerux illustrations #16402