

# A Tale of Two Cities

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Date: 10 July 2016

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn to the word of the Lord, Isaiah chapter 2, verse 1. The word that Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it.

And many people shall come and say, Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, that we may walk in his paths.

For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into pruning hooks.

Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

[ 1 : 06 ] An abrupt change of tone now in verse 6. For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east, and fortune tellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands of the children of foreigners.

Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures. Their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. Their land is filled with idols.

They bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made. So a man is humbled, and each one is brought low. Do not forgive them. Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust.

From before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, the haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled.

And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up, and it shall be brought low, against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up, and against all the oaks of Bashan, against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills, against every high tower, and against every fortified wall, against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.

[ 2 : 31 ] The haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of man shall be brought low. And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. And the idols shall utterly pass away.

And people shall enter the caves of the rocks, and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver, and their idols of gold, which they have made for themselves to worship. To the moles and the bats, to enter the caverns of the rocks, and the clefts of the hills, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

Stop regarding man, in whose nostrils is breath. What account is he? And behold, the Lord of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the support and supply.

All support of bread, and all support of water. The mighty man, and the soldier, the judge, and the prophet, the diviner, and the elder, the captain of fifty, and the man of rank.

[ 3 : 41 ] The counselor, and the skillful musician, the expert in charms. And make boys their princes. And infants shall rule over them. And the people will oppress one another.

Everyone his fellow, and everyone his neighbor. The youth will be insolent to the elder, and the despised to the honorable. And the chapter continues, developing these ideas.

But we'll take up the reading now, chapter four, verse two. Once again, a very striking change of tone. In that day, the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall

be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.

And he who is left in Zion, and remains in Jerusalem, will be called holy. Everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem. And the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst, by a spirit of judgment, and a spirit of burning.

Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke, and the shining of a flaming fire by night.

[ 4 : 55 ] For over all the glory, there will be a canopy. There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge, and a shelter from the storm, and the rain.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Now, could I ask you, please, to have our Bibles open at page 567, and we'll have a moment of prayer.

And God, our Father, as we draw near to you, we pray that you will most graciously draw near to us. That you will open your word to our hearts and minds.

That you will open our hearts and minds to your word. We ask this in the name of the living word, Christ Jesus. Amen. From our house, we have a wonderful view across the city to the Kempsey Hills.

And immediately behind them, so it seems, rise the great mountains. We know, of course, that between the hills and the mountains, there are mile upon mile of road, of woodland, of meadow, and of all kinds of countryside.

[ 6 : 24 ] And that often reminds me of the way the prophets look at the future. They look at the future, and they are given a vision of the events. But they are not told what time will elapse between these events.

It's not revealed to them that, in fact, the coming of the Messiah, the King, the Christ, to whom they look, will actually be separated by many, many years.

And so it is in this passage today. women, it helps us to answer the question, when will this happen? When will the mountain of the Lord be established and lifted up the hill, above the hills? When will the nations flow to Zion? When is this going to happen? Now, you notice the passage we read has really two bookends. One is the glories of the nations going to Zion in chapter 2, and then in chapter 4, the wonder of how God will protect and provide for Zion, his people.

Then in between, there is this truly dreadful passage about what Zion is like now. How are we going to get from chapter 2, verses 1 to 5, to chapter 4, verses 2 to 6?

[ 7 : 43 ] How is it going to happen? When is it going to happen? Now, when I was studying theology, I was told that prophets were not foretellers. They didn't foretell the future, it was said.

Rather, they were foretellers. They looked at the present and they made comments and they speculated on what might happen. That makes them much more like political journalists or political commentators, of course, than people bringing the word of God.

Because I'm sure, as we've seen as political events have unfolded, in the last few weeks. How pointless and idle the speculation often is. So, the truth of the matter is they are both foretellers and foretellers.

They speak, of course, to their own age. You have to speak to your own age. You can't speak to the past, which is gone. You can't speak to the future, which has not yet arrived. You have to bring a message for your own day, as these prophets did.

But the point is they also spoke from the perspective of the day of the Lord. And that means that their message is relevant to us today. You see, if they're only foretellers, if they only spoke to their own day, then their books would only be of interest to people interested in ancient history.

[ 9 : 01 ] I'm not going to ask how many of you are interested in ancient history. I suspect what the answer would be. But, because it's not just their own day, because it's the perspective of the day of the Lord, then they are speaking to every generation.

And, what they speak about is partially fulfilled when Christ came for the first time. But it will be finally fulfilled when he returns.

So, when will the nations go to Jerusalem to hear the word of the Lord? Well, one fulfillment of that was obviously the day of Pentecost, when the Ethiopian finance minister went up to Jerusalem, and as he was returning, reading this very book of prophet Isaiah, chapter 53, he was joined by the evangelist who told him what had happened and what would happen.

And as the gospel spreads throughout the world, as more and more people become part of the kingdom, then this is partially fulfilled. This is the nations coming to Zion, because Zion is not just the literal city of Jerusalem, it's the people of God throughout all time and space.

So, you've got these partial fulfillments, the Ethiopian in Acts chapter 8, and the gospel as it spreads throughout the world, and these partial fulfillments will continue until, verse 2, in the latter days.

[10:28] Now, the latter days are what Hebrews calls the last days when God has spoken by his son. He's given his final word. But there's also the last day.

Isaiah talks about that day, the day of the Lord. The Lord has a day. That is the day which will complete the last days. And we are living in the last days now.

By the way, that's not like those people who tell us how near we are to the second coming with no idea. We've been living in the last days since Christ came the first time, since he died and rose and ascended to heaven and sent the spirit.

So it's the spread of the gospel throughout the world. And that's my second introductory point. Prophecy is practical. It's not about speculation about the future.

It's about living in the present. It tells us the future is secure. The eternal future is secure. Zion will be Zion founded on the rock of the ages.

[11:31] God but it's about living in the present. And this is the only thing ultimately will keep us going in the present, knowing that the future is secure. Knowing that the reality is not ultimately our present sinfulness, weakness, and failure, but the future is the redeemed people of God, the multitude that no one can count, Revelation 7, gathered around the throne and around the Lamb.

that's a present reality, but it's also a future reality. Like Abraham, God's people are called to look for a city and travel to it.

Not to travel into the future hoping that when we get there there will be a city. That city is already there, and Abraham traveled to it. So I'm calling this morning the tale of two cities.

Now normally that would be Zion and Babylon, Babylon, which is one of the great biblical themes. The trouble is the present day Zion is far more like Babylon than it is like Zion.

So three things then. First of all, what Zion will be. That's chapter two, verses two to five. What Zion is at the moment.

[12:49] That's chapter two, verse six, to chapter four, verse one. And finally, how will Zion be changed? How are we going to get from the Zion that will be through the Zion that now exists to the final city of God?

So what Zion will be? It's obvious this passage from chapter two, verse one, to chapter four, verse six, is a unit shown by the bookends and the word that I, the son of Amos.

By the way, this is not the prophet Amos. The spelling is different and this is an oracle about Zion. What Zion is, what Zion will be, and how Zion will become what God intends it to be.

And it's an echo of the call of Abraham. Abraham went to the city and in Abraham all the nations will be blessed. The imagery of cosmic upheaval, the mountains will be lifted above the hills, also used by the prophet Haggai in the passage that Terry will be expounding this evening.

And again, of course, in the song of Mary, he will put down the mighty from their thrones and exalt the humble, as Mary says, in the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah encourages us to have far horizons, to look far in time and space.

[14:10] So not struck by some of the missionary hymns of earlier generation, some of the 19th century hymns that sound old hat now, mentioning places that don't even exist now or have different names.

But when they sang the whole wide world for Jesus, to him shall all men bow in city and in prairie, the world for Jesus now, that was the vision of Isaiah here.

How is it going to happen? Well, it's not going to happen by our efforts, is it? Look at this interesting phrase in the end of verse two, all nations shall flow to it.

water does not flow uphill. This is clearly the work of God. This is clearly the work of the Creator. In other words, this city is not going to come about through our efforts.

This city is going to come about entirely through the work of the Spirit of God. It's important to remember that. It doesn't mean that what we do is unimportant. What it means is that what we do must be part of what God does, not seen as our work for the Lord, but as us taking part in what the Lord is doing.

[ 15 : 26 ] Blake William still used to say, God has only one worker, the Holy Spirit. I think we do well to remember that, both when we get discouraged and when we become too conceited about our own efforts.

This is the work of the Lord. And it's anticipated, as I say, in the present, when the word is heeded, come let us go to the mountain, verse 3, he may teach us his ways, that we may walk in his paths. And this produces peace, peace with God, first of all, and then peace among humans. Now notice it's the house of the God of Jacob, not the temple of the God of Jacob.

The temple is a place where people go to worship. A house is the place where God lives. That's pointing forward to the book of Revelation.

The dwelling of God is with humans, and they will dwell with him, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And it needs a response.

[ 16 : 28 ] Come, let us go up. Once again, this is echoed in Haggai, in the chapter we looked at last Sunday evening. Get up into the mountains and build a house, and come, let us walk.

Like Abraham, leave the city of this world for this new and transformed creation, the deeper country of C.S. Lewis' Narnia, a country which we can glimpse partly now.

What Zion will be? The city of God, where he will live with his people, where there will be peace, where there will be harmony, where there will be joy, where the frustrations, the sinfulness, the wickedness will all be gone.

But, verse 6, how on earth can we move from the walking in the light of the Lord to verse 6?

What Zion is now from chapter 2, verse 7, to chapter 4, verse 1? I don't know if you remember your dreams. Most of my dreams are rubbish, or more like nightmares, than, I don't mean nightmares, full of monsters, and so on, I mean nightmares that could actually happen, but anyway, is this a dream, and we've woken up to the dismal reality?

[ 17 : 45 ] The point, of course, is this is not a dream. This is a vision. It's a vision given to Isaiah of what will actually happen. But, we're back in the world of everyday reality.

Zion is like Babylon. Verse 6, they are full of things from the east, copying the great civilizations of a Syria, Babylon, and Egypt, continual temptation in their story.

The future of Zion is secure, but if we're going to reach it, we have to walk in his ways. And this is going to be dramatized powerfully in chapter 7, where Isaiah says to the godless king Ahaz, if you do not stand firm in faith, you will not stand at all.

Powerful message running through Isaiah. Indeed, in chapter 7, you've got the godless king Ahaz, very able man by worldly standards, but totally uncommitted to the Lord, and totally godless.

Whereas, in chapter 38, you have his son Hezekiah, a man with flaws like all of us, and yet a man who, in the midst of a far greater threat, trusted.

[ 19 : 02 ] He had faith. So, Isaiah is saying, are we relying on false gods? Now, once again, as I said last week, how do we apply this?

Now, it would be very, very easy to apply this to other people, wouldn't it? Look out at our society, the worship of money, worship of sex, the worship of all kinds of false gods.

But this is a rallying call to us, to ask ourselves, what our false securities are. And notice that this is not just society deteriorating.

The Lord has rejected his people, verse 6. You have rejected your people. And by the way, if you think it's bad here, wait till next week till we get to chapter 5.

And Isaiah is saying, don't rely on false gods. Don't rely on idols. God has judged them, God has rejected them, because they have rejected him.

[ 20 : 10 ] I think that's the point always to remember. Not just as God arbitrary looks and says, I'm going to judge them, it's that God has judged his people because they've turned away from him.

Like what Romans 1 says, the terrible divine hands of God gave them over three times in that chapter. As if God says, you've chosen your way, I'm going to underwrite it.

So first of all, in verses 6-11, he talks about various false gods. The false god of superstition, full of things from the east, and of fortune tellers like the Philistines.

The gods who seem much more glamorous and exciting. Of course, the great thing about the worship of these gods is there was no inconvenient ten commandments. And indeed, the word holy, and of course we'll come to that particularly in chapter 6, holy, holy, holy, a Yahweh of hosts.

Holy simply meant in pagan religion associated with a temple. Temple prostitutes were called the holy ones because they worked in a temple. You see, the danger of making a place holy.

[ 21 : 21 ] nothing to do with us, as of course it does. We can idolize places, we can idolize ways of doing things, and trust in them more than we do in the living God.

Then there's money, silver, and their land is filled with silver and gold. There is no end to their treasures. The land is filled with horses. By the way, the Bible isn't anti-horse.

You might feel sometimes that, so if you're interested in horses, don't worry. Horses are a symbol of military power. That's why Moses said in Deuteronomy 18, a king will begin to multiply the numbers of horses.

Just what happened in Solomon's reign. Now, military power, economic power, superstition, all of these find echoes in our own heart.

Now, the point is this, the prophet is being deliberately provocative. The prophet is not saying you don't need money. The prophet is not saying you don't need defense.

[ 22 : 29 ] What he is saying is that the root of your problem is a prideful self-sufficiency. Verse 11, the haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

In other words, when we put other things at the center rather than the Lord, then we are lapsing into a prideful self-sufficiency.

And the contrast here is between the invisible God and these visible means of support. Said of Moses in Hebrews 11, he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

Another thing to remember is that Isaiah is not denouncing, as I say, money, defense as such, nor in verse 12, against all the cedars of Lebanon, against all the oaks of Bashan, verse 15, against every high tower and every fortified wall, amidst all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.

It's not that cedars and oaks are bad in themselves. This is almost certainly alluding to nature worship, to the worship of trees, to the worship of the creation, rather than the creator.

[ 23 : 52 ] And once again, when he says, against all the beautiful craft, he is not saying that human culture is bad. Now, throughout the history of God's people, there have been two extreme views about human culture and civilization, about art, music, and all the rest of it.

The early church father Tertullian famously said, what has Athens to do with Jerusalem? In other words, what has reading Greek myths and so on, and Greek civilization and culture got to do with the work of God?

And there's always been an element of that, and there is an element of that in evangelicalism, where sometimes education and learning is downvalued. On the other hand, in the late 19th century, a developed view, particularly associated with the poet Matthew Arnold and poet Swinburne and others, that humanity had come of age, and what they needed was education, not transformation.

And that'd be all right if educated people were less sinful than uneducated people. But it's not true, and we know it's not true. Education is not an alternative way to salvation.

education. No one who knows me is going to accuse me of being anti-education. However, education, culture, will not save us.

[ 25 : 18 ] That is the point. There is a place for all that is good and beautiful if it's given over to Christ. Indeed, the book of Revelation speaks of the kings of the earth bringing their treasures into the city, which I take it means that all that has been good and valuable and in human order and human civilization, purge of its sin, will have a part in the new Jerusalem.

So there's a place for all that is good and beautiful, but don't rest on it. In fact, verse 22, end of chapter 2, stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath.

Of what account is he? Once again, that is not degrading humanity. It's not saying humanity is worthless. That is not the biblical view. The biblical view is saying don't bow down to human beings.

Don't give them a place that they don't deserve. In their nostrils's breath, in other words, they're going to die. They're not permanent. The Lord lives when people die.

So basically what he's saying is don't trust in outward things. I don't know about you, but I find that very, very challenging and disturbing.

[ 26 : 39 ] So much of my life and my thinking tends to get bound up with trusting these other things. If we use them as good gifts of God, thankfully, then they'll be blessed.

Read the book of Ecclesiastes. When these things dominate, then they, what does the author say? They're nothing. They're hevel, a puff of wind.

They're God's good gifts, but we must not rely on the gifts, but on the giver. And how the Lord's, and chapter three, powerful chapter, how chapter three to four, verse one.

By the way, this is one of the sillier verse divisions. Obviously, chapter four, verse one belongs to the end of chapter three. Remember, by the way, the chapter and verse divisions are not inspired. They don't occur in the earliest texts of the Bible. Anyway, how the Lord sees Zion. When the Lord looks at Zion, what does he see? Now, you're pretty certain, if you had gone on to [www.zion.com](http://www.zion.com), this is not what they'd be saying about themselves.

[ 27 : 48 ] They'd be talking about, like the church in Laodicea, wealthy, increased in goods, don't need anything. But, the Lord is looking at them, and he's saying, you are trusting in the wrong things.

We don't have time to look at the, last week I compared the book of Isaiah to the Breton fishermen launching out into the vast Atlantic, or I'll use Alec Matier's metaphor of the mouse nibbling at the giant cheese.

I felt when I read this passage, it was like a rich slab of cherry cake. What I'm really doing is trying to pick out the cherries, because the other, I mean, I don't want, I don't want it to take 40 years to get through the book of Isaiah.

I don't think the Lord's going to give me 40 years anyway, but that aside, I'm trying to bring out the main points here. God has judged, and one of the ways he's judged is lack of decent leadership, verses 2 and 4.

He's taking away the importance of the mighty man, the soldier. These are all symbols of the important people in society. Verse 4, I will make boys that princes and infants shall rule over them.

[ 29 : 02 ] Totally immature leadership, which of course will lead to anarchy. The people will oppress one another, everyone his neighbor. And in verse 7, I will not be a healer.

In my house there is neither bread nor cloak. The idea here is the kind of cloak of leadership. The word here means a sign of office. The idea is somebody wearing a cloak or a robe and saying because I look like a leader, I am a leader.

This is totally anarchic society. And the blatant sin in verses 9 to 12, look on their faces, bear witness against them.

Their ostentation and so on. And in verse 16, the Lord has said, because the daughters of Zion are haughty. Zion, a wonderful passage for a male chauvinist to preach on and give a tirade on women and their image consciousness.

I'm afraid if you go down that road, you're misinterpreting what Isaiah is saying. Let me assure you, men are at least as vain as women and at least as proud of their appearance.

[ 30 : 15 ] The point is, look at the phrase, the daughters of Zion. That's obviously echoing daughter Zion. He's not simply talking about the women of Zion, he's talking about the people of Zion.

Remember this feminine imagery is regularly used, the bride of Yahweh, the bride of Christ. And as I say, it's the ostentation, once again depending on possessions, flaunting possessions, Zion itself is haughty and her people are showing off.

That is the point of this passage. You've got a time to go into it. And this is all going to be destroyed. Terrible war is going to happen. And chapter four, verse one, seven women shall take hold of one man in that day.

Talk about the horrors of war when a whole generation of fighting men will be wiped out. Remember last weekend, the commemoration of the battle of the Somme a hundred years ago, when thousands upon thousands of people, whole generation of people, sometimes the population of whole villages wiped out.

And that is the kind of thing that Isaiah is speaking about. The price of the whole generation wiped out. And that was to happen during Isaiah's lifetime.

[ 31 : 36 ] It was to happen even more after he had gone in the time of the exile. What Zion is now is a terrible tragedy, a terrible travesty of what it might be.

How will Zion be changed then? Our final point in chapter 4 verses 2 to 6. Are we ever going to make it? Now, as I said, we're not going to make it by trying a little harder and doing a little better. I said in the late 19th century, particularly in the Western world, there grew up this view that humanity was getting better and better and better.

Reflected in some of the hymns of the time, sentimental hymns about the new Jerusalem. One hymn which talks about the city isn't something that's coming down from heaven, but the city is

something we'll achieve by our own efforts.

I mentioned the Battle of the Somme. Difficult to see how that view managed to survive that Holocaust, but it did, and it still exists.

[ 32 : 46 ] It's terribly easy if you live in certain parts of the country and in certain localities to believe that humanity is getting better and hoping for the best.

That's not what Isaiah is hoping for. Isaiah is saying in effect, the Lord himself is going to intervene. The Lord is going to protect, establish Zion.

There's a rite of pictures here. In that day, the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious.

The branch of the Lord, and what or who is the branch of the Lord?

The Messiah himself. In chapter six, at the end of the great vision, Isaiah talks about the tree that's cut down, but nevertheless it will live, because in its stump there is the seed of life.

And in chapter 11, he's going to about the shoot will come from the house of David. The tree will be cut down, Israel will go into exile, but life will remain and life will flourish again because of the branch.

[ 33 : 56 ] There will be a rescue mission from heaven. That's what will bring it about. Transformed lives, verses three and four, he who is left in Zion. The idea of the remnant, as the darkness increases, as the land lurches towards exile, the prophets talk about two things.

One is there will be destruction, there will be judgment, but the second thing is a remnant will return. In chapter 36, he is going to say this chapter, if I can find the verses, he is going to say that the ransomed of the Lord, chapter 35, the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.

This idea of the remnant runs through scripture. First time it occurs is in the story of the ark. The Lord destroys humanity but saves an umber from whom the rest of humanity will spring.

And in the opening chapters of Luke, the branch, the Messiah, the Christ, comes both from the remnant and to the remnant.

How tiny a remnant is. Handful of people, Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zacharias and Simeon and Anna. Handful of people looking for him.

[ 35 : 20 ] Notice their sins washed away. We sang last week, what can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus and the spirit of burning, the fire of God cleansing.

That's what's going to happen to the prophet himself in chapter 6. An angel, a seraph, is to come from the altar with a burning coal and cleanse Isaiah's lips. That's a very important point.

I'll make it again when we look at chapter 6. How are we going to teach judgment without being judgmental? Without simply sounds as we're scolding?

The only way to do it, as the prophet discovers, is by realizing we are under judgment ourselves.

Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

A redeemed humanity made fit to be the citizens of the new Jerusalem. And the Messiah will create the place. Chapter verse 5.

[ 36 : 23 ] The Lord will create. That's the great word of Genesis 1. The word only ever used of God, who alone can create. And it will bring in a new exodus, the fire and the cloud.

The fire by night and the cloud by day. There's going to be a major theme of the later part of the book, the new creation and the new exodus. God's people will be remade.

Zion will flourish. It will leave the shadowlands for the deeper country. And there will be every possible kind of protection. Verse 6. A booth for shade by day and a refuge, a shelter from the storm and rain.

Almost certainly echoing Psalm 121, the Lord will be a protector as you go out and as you come in. Every possible kind of protection.

This passage, as I say, is both challenging and encouraging. That's Isaiah's method. Isaiah realizes if he only challenges, people are going to get totally discouraged and say, I'm not going to make it.

[ 37 : 31 ] And of course, Isaiah is going to say, well, that's what you've got to realize, you're not going to make it. But secondly, his encouraging message is you don't have to make it because someone else has made it for you.

Someone else, and this someone else is to become clearer and clearer throughout the book until we come to the great 53rd chapter where he carries our iniquities, where he bears our sins.

We must recognize what we are and what Zion is before we can possibly become what he wants us to be and what Zion will be.

so since our pathway to glory, pathway to Zion cannot be thwarted, let's live our lives now in the light of then.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we are sinful. We are fallen. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own heart in ways that we know can only lead to destruction.

[ 38 : 42 ] And yet, in the midst of that dark background, you call us to the light and glory of the new Jerusalem to walk in ways and join the redeemed people of God as they come with singing to Zion.

And we pray that day by day our lives will show the wonders of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Amen.