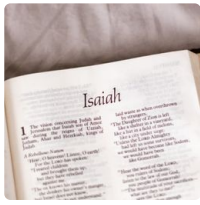


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Isaiah - Spiritual Zion



Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explains how the mention of Zion in Isaiah is more spiritual than physical. He states that the demographic shift in the Old Testament moved from a covenant with Jewish people to including Gentiles as well. Gregg believes that when the passage talks about Zion, it is referring to the future glory of the church and not its present state. The church is viewed as a holy nation made up of God's chosen people who do not fight wars or wars of religion, unlike the institutional church.

Transcript

Now we're going to move further in the same direction that we were going in our last lecture. We were talking about various ways in which nations, including Israel and Judah, but even the secular nations, the pagan nations, they weren't secular but they were pagan nations, are described in non-literal terms in the prophets. We talked about how anthropomorphic imagery is used often where a nation is personified as an individual man and sometimes described in ways like being decapitated, having the head cut off, or being sick, or a nation being a leper, having its hair shaved off, those kinds of things.

Also an animal, having its tail and head cut off. Nations are therefore likened to individual humans or individual beasts. But also they are likened to water sometimes.

Especially pagan nations are likened to the sea or to a flood of waters or a river overflowing. Largely I think due to the fact that to the Jewish mind water is unpredictable and unstable. It's not like land, which terra firma, you stand on solid ground and you know where you stand and it's not going anywhere unless you're in California.

Then it might go off into the sea, you never know any day now. But for the most part land doesn't move, water does, and therefore Israel, which is grounded in Yahweh and in the law of Yahweh, has stability. The nations don't have that stability, they're just restless, like the restless sea, as the scripture says in Isaiah.

Now we were then talking about how many times an individual nation or a list of individual nations are given, but it's not really about them. They are simply given as representative of Gentiles or nations or humanity as a whole. I wanted to give another

example of that if I might, or two, because these are perhaps important for us to see.

We were looking at Isaiah 11 earlier, which is the whole chapter is a messianic age passage. As I said earlier, I believe the messianic age passages are about the age of the church, not about a future millennial age. That is the alternative view.

One view is that this is an age that will be inaugurated when Jesus comes back in a future millennium. The other view is that it was inaugurated at the first coming of Christ, and it is essentially the age that we live in, the church age. As I mentioned in a previous lecture, all the New Testament writers took it in the latter meaning, that it is the New Testament age.

It is now, is the messianic age. Chapter 11 is one of those passages that is the entire chapter is about that age. There are more than one time in the New Testament that this chapter is quoted or alluded to and applied to this present age.

Yet, it sometimes mentions ancient nations, some of which don't exist anymore and didn't exist in the time of Christ. Verses 14-16 says, but they shall fly down, this is the people of God in their conquest of the nations through the gospel, I believe this is what is referred to, although it is written as if it is a physical war and a physical attack. They shall fly down upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west.

The Philistines have been gone for millennia. They haven't been around. Together they shall plunder the people of the east.

They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab. Edom was extinct like two centuries before Christ. Moab likewise has been gone for a very long time, and Ammon shall obey them.

The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt with his mighty hand, etc. We won't go further. These nations that are conquered by the people of God, the ones that are named are extinct nations, and they were extinct before Christ came.

They are not coming back. God could raise up from the ground, from the dust, from the stones, descendants of Edom, if he wanted to, or the Philistines, but there is not really any reason to anticipate from this passage that that's what he's saying. This is describing the age of the church and the church's message and warfare extending to the nations and conquering the nations with the gospel, like Jesus is described doing in Revelation 19 with the sword that proceeds out of his mouth, the word of God, he conquers the nations with it.

It's the evangelization of the nations by the church, and yet the nations that are named are not really the actual nations that God evangelized. These nations that are named were current in Isaiah's time. They were not current by the time of Christ, and therefore they stand for nations that are not really these particular nations.

That's the important point, and one reason I bring that up is because it helps us not to misunderstand a commonly misunderstood passage in Isaiah 19. A fairly well-known passage among biblically literate people, and it often comes up for discussion as a passage about the end times. In Isaiah 19, there's a prophecy that has to do with Assyria and Egypt being joined with Israel under the Lord.

It says in verse 23, This is not referring to an invasion but friendly visitors to each other. It says, Now, my people and the work of my hands in Isaiah's day only were terms that God used of Israel. But he says someday the same terms will be used of Egypt and Assyria.

Now, Egypt and Assyria were the classic enemies of Israel up to that date. Later Babylon would be added to the list. But in Isaiah's day, Egypt had oppressed Israel in their history, and Assyria was threatening Israel at the present time.

Therefore, these were bad guys. Assyria and Egypt were hated and feared as enemies of Israel. The prophecy is that both of these nations will someday be not only at peace with Israel, but will be serving Yahweh alongside Israel.

Now, some people have thought this refers to some development yet to happen in the world of geopolitics in the Middle East. And that someday Egypt and Israel will be on good terms. In fact, back in the 1970s, I guess, or 80s, I guess it was the 80s, wasn't it, when the Camp David Accords were signed? Remember Jimmy Carter going over there and a peaceable agreement was made between Israel and Egypt.

Many Bible prophecy teachers are saying, hey, that's spoken of in Isaiah chapter 19, that Egypt and Israel, now Assyria's got to get involved, whoever they may be. But the point is, this isn't talking about the last days. This is talking about the same thing Isaiah 11 and many other passages are talking about.

They're using the names of ancient nations to represent Gentiles in general. It's a figurative passage saying that in the Messianic age, that is this present age, Gentiles, represented by some of the worst of them, Assyria and Egypt, will actually be reconciled to God and along with the remnant of Israel will serve God together. This is the church.

The remnant of Israel have come into the church and Gentiles have come into the church. Notably, Israel is only one third, Assyria and Egypt make two thirds, which means the Gentile involvement will be greater than the Jewish involvement. That is, the remnant of Israel will be serving God, so will Gentiles.

Egypt and Assyria are not literally the nations of Egypt and Assyria. They are simply representative of Gentiles like you and me. I'm neither Egyptian nor Assyrian, but I'm a Gentile.

And I now am in one body serving God alongside Jews who believe in Christ. Now, the

number one third in the Bible, we'll encounter it frequently in the book of Revelation. It's one of the important numbers in the book of Revelation.

It means a significant minority. It's not a literal statistic. And to say that Israel will be one third alongside Egypt and Assyria, one of three, it just means that actually, to the surprise of Israel in Isaiah's day, some day Gentiles who are at this point in Isaiah's lifetime very hostile to Israel and Israel's God will be outnumbering the Jews in worshipping Yahweh.

Certainly that has been fulfilled in Christ. Gentiles do outnumber Jews who are worshipping Yahweh today. And that is what it's talking about.

But many people want it to be the literal nation of Egypt and Assyria. And, of course, that would have to apply to some future time, an actual highway built and so forth. If you've read through Isaiah already, you know that the word highway is a term that is used figuratively in Isaiah.

And it's always applied to the Messianic age, which is the present age. We saw the highway in Isaiah 11, which we've looked at already a few times, a Messianic passage. But perhaps more unmistakably, in Isaiah 40, the highway image is clearly applied to the present age.

In Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3, This is one of, oh, half a dozen times that Isaiah refers to a highway in the wilderness or just a highway in general. It's the highway that God is building. He mentioned it in the verse we just looked at where there'd be this highway from Assyria to Egypt and so forth.

There's frequent reference to a highway that the exiles travel from Babylon to Jerusalem, but it's figurative. There was a highway mentioned in chapter 11. There's a highway mentioned in chapter 35, another chapter that's entirely a Messianic age passage.

Isaiah 35, there's a highway there. It's called the highway of holiness and the righteous walk on it. Remember, Jesus said, I am the way.

What's a way? A road. Jesus is the highway that the righteous walk on. But here's the point.

This passage about the highway in the wilderness, we are not in confusion, nor do we have any question about its fulfillment. Because several New Testament books quote this verse, and they say it's talking about John the Baptist's ministry. He's building that highway.

The Isaianic highway was under construction when John the Baptist began to preach and to remove the obstacles and to call people to repentance and remove the stones and level the ground for the highway to be built. The highway in Isaiah is clearly the highway

that the ground was broken for and it began to be built when John the Baptist was preaching and continues to this day. It's a figure that applies to the present age.

So the reference to Assyria and Egypt on the highway and so forth is a reference to Gentiles in this present age traveling the way of Christ. Now, the most important nation spoken of in Isaiah is the church. Of course, you never find the term church, not in the Hebrew Bible.

In the Old Testament, sometimes the Bible speaks about the congregation of Israel. The Old Testament was translated into Greek a couple and a half centuries before the time of Christ. And this reference to the congregation was translated into Greek as the Ekklesia.

So in the Greek Old Testament, the word Ekklesia is used to speak of the congregation of Israel. That's the word the New Testament writers, who also wrote in Greek, used to speak of the Christian community. It is the word that's translated church.

The Greek word for church in the New Testament is Ekklesia. Although you don't find the word church in our Old Testament, you do find the word Ekklesia, the Greek word for church, in the Old Testament in the Septuagint when it's translated into Greek. And it refers to Israel.

Israel is the Ekklesia in the Old Testament. The people of God following Jesus Christ are the Ekklesia in the New Testament. Now, there is a continuity and a discontinuity between the church and Israel.

In one sense, there's continuity. We are attached to the same root as Israel. Paul uses the imagery of an olive tree.

It's Israel. Some of the branches have been removed, he said, because of their unbelief. He's referring to Jews who did not believe in Christ and are no longer part of Israel because of that.

He says, you Gentiles are like wild olive branches that have been grafted in. Now we're tapping in. He says, you partake of the root and the fatness of the olive tree.

In other words, the olive tree is Israel. It once had mostly Jewish branches. Some of those have been removed and replaced with Gentile branches, believers.

It's still the same tree. The tree has had some shifting of its branches, but it's still got the same root, the same stalk. It's still Israel.

In other words, Israel is now the believing Jews and Gentiles. The other name for that in the Bible is called the church. Paul indicates that there's been a continuity from old Israel to the new Israel, in that the tree is the same tree.

You see, even in the Old Testament, Israel was comprised of Jews and Gentiles. We think

of Israel mainly as Jews. But it was never all Jews.

Israel was established as a nation at Mount Sinai after the Exodus. The Exodus involved mostly Israelites, but not all. It says in Exodus that a mixed multitude went out with them.

Egyptians, possibly slaves of other nationalities that snuck in with them and got away when the Israelites went away. More than just Israelites. Mostly Israelites.

But others, too, went with them. They came to Mount Sinai, and God made a covenant with all of them. And He said, if you will keep My covenant and obey My voice, you'll be a peculiar nation to Me.

You'll be a peculiar kingdom to Me. And so Israel was formed as a nation at that point. Mostly of ethnic Israelites.

Not entirely. But it was defined not by ethnicity, but by the covenant. God said, if you keep My covenant, you'll be part of this nation.

Now, in the law, it was clear that a Gentile could keep that covenant. A Gentile could be circumcised. Could come into Israel.

Could keep Passover. Could keep Sabbath. They'd become like a native of the land, the law said.

If a Gentile, a foreigner, wants to come in, become a Jew, they could do that. They could be a proselyte, we'd call it. And, although they had no Jewish blood in them, they would become part of Israel just like anybody else.

Because of the covenant. They came under the terms of the covenant. On the other hand, a Jew who was born under the covenant could defect.

Many things in the law are found to say, if a man does such and such, he'll be cut off from the people. Usually murder and idolatry were named as the things that would cause a person to be cut off from the people. But, in other words, a Jew who violated the covenant would be cut off from Israel.

A Gentile who came under the terms of the covenant would be included in Israel. So what defines Israel? People who are in the covenant. Gentiles who are faithful to the covenant are Israel.

Jews and Gentiles unfaithful to the covenant are out of Israel. Israel has always been, in God's sight, the faithful remnant of Jews and Gentiles who are defined by their covenant faithfulness. Now, what happened when Jesus came? He made a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

It replaced the old covenant. Israel is still defined in terms of covenant faithfulness, but there's a new covenant to be faithful to now. The old covenant is defunct.

The writer of Hebrews says, in Hebrews 8.13, he says, In speaking of a new covenant, he has made the old one obsolete. God doesn't have two covenant people at the same time. It's like a man doesn't have two wives at the same time.

God divorced one, he said, in Isaiah and Jeremiah and Hosea, and he married another. He entered into a new covenant. But the other was made up of the remnant of the first group.

The remnant of Israel followed Jesus and became part of his movement. They entered into the new covenant, but so have many Gentiles. The point is that the name Israel in the Old Testament referred to a nation of people who were defined as such by the fact they were faithful to God's covenant, the covenant at Mount Sinai.

That covenant is defunct now. There's a new covenant that has come to replace it. Israel is still defined by the same terms.

Israel is those who are faithful to the covenant, but the current one, not the old one. So that the remnant of the Jewish nation that came into the new covenant are still Israel. Paul says the ones who didn't are lopped off like branches cut off the tree.

The tree is Israel. The branch has been lopped off, the unfaithful Jews who did not come into the new covenant. But the Gentiles who came into it are added to it.

So you can see in Paul's theology, Israel is essentially the church. Some people think this is replacement theology, but it's not so much replacement. It's just continuation.

It's just that Israel was defined by one covenant initially, but God, even through Jeremiah, said there'd be another one that would come. And it would be different than the first. And the new one came.

Now Israel is still defined by covenant. It's just that only a remnant of the original Israel came into the new Israel through the new covenant. And Gentiles have come in too.

And in the Old Testament, Israel included Jews and Gentiles who were faithful to the covenant. In the New Testament, Israel is Jews and Gentiles who are faithful to the new covenant. There's been a demographic shift because in the Old Testament, most of the covenant people were Jewish by birth and fewer were Gentiles.

That has shifted. Now most of them are Gentile by birth and fewer are Jews. But a demographic shift is not a change in identity.

It's still the same nation. So in the prophets, many times you'll see the word Israel or Judah used depending on context. It's talking in the Old Testament context of Old

Testament Israel and Judah.

But when it's talking about the messianic age, it's actually talking about the new definition of who is a Jew. Remember Paul said in Romans 2.28 and 29, he said, He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is of the flesh and outward. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and that is true circumcision which is of the heart.

So Paul is saying being outwardly a Jew doesn't make a person a Jew. And Jesus said the same thing in the book of Revelation twice. In Revelation 2.9 and Revelation 3.9. He spoke of those who say they are Jews but are not, but are a synagogue of Satan, he said.

Those would be Jewish people that God doesn't recognize as Jews because they follow Satan instead of Christ. The point here is we come across the expression Israel, Judah, and even Jerusalem a number of times in Isaiah and the rest of the prophets in instances where it is not actually talking about physical Jerusalem. In the context of the new covenant, it's the church, but it's referred to as Jerusalem or sometimes Zion.

Zion, by the way, is the name of the mountain that Jerusalem is built on. So in the Bible, Zion and Jerusalem are kind of interchangeable terms. But all these terms originally in the Old Testament referred to an actual city in the Middle East in a land that had once been called Canaan and was given to the people of Israel and came to be called Israel.

Mount Zion, Jerusalem, Israel, Judah, these are all terms that had to do with that nation. But in the messianic age where the new covenant now has redefined loyalty to God in terms of a new covenant, those terms apply to the church. And let me just show you before we see it in Isaiah, let me show you what we see in the New Testament on this.

In Hebrews chapter 12, verses 18 through 24, the writer says, For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to the blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. If you're not familiar with the Old Testament history, this is talking about Mount Sinai, where the law was given. The writer is saying we haven't come to Mount Sinai and been put under the law.

That's not where we're standing right now. Mount Sinai was a mountain that was terrifying. The cloud and the thunder and the lightning scared people.

They didn't want to hear the word spoken. It was a booming voice. They recoiled in fear.

He says in verse 24, They could not endure what was commanded. And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with an arrow. And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I'm exceedingly afraid and trembling.

Okay, that's not the mountain we've come to. But he tells us what mountain we have come to. See, that mountain we haven't come to is the Old Covenant.

Mount Sinai, where the law and the covenant were made to the Jews. We haven't come there, but we've come to another mountain. He says, You have come to Mount Zion.

Now, he's already said we have not come to a mountain that may be touched. This Mount Zion is not physical. And he explains that.

You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Not the physical Jerusalem or the physical Zion. It's spiritual Zion, heavenly Jerusalem.

To an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn. That's Christ. He's the firstborn.

Who are registered in heaven. What we have come to is the church, which he says is Mount Zion. Which he says is the heavenly Jerusalem.

In other words, to the New Testament mind. The church is the spiritual Jerusalem, the spiritual Zion. That's where we've come to.

We're not going there, we've come there. In coming into Christ, we have come into the new Jerusalem, which is the church. So Paul says in Galatians 4, verses 25 and 26, Paul's contrasting physical Jerusalem in Israel with the church, which he refers to as the Jerusalem which is above.

And he says in verse 25 and 26, he says, This Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to Jerusalem, which now is and is in bondage with her children. Mount Sinai is where the law was given. Jerusalem on earth is bound to that law, in bondage to that law.

There's a correlation between physical Jerusalem and the law and the Old Covenant and Mount Sinai. But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. Of who all? You and I have the same mother.

Yeah, we do spiritually. The church is the mother of us all. It's the bride of our father.

It's our, you know, it's it's the womb through which Christ brings forth his children. The church is the mother of us all. Paul calls it the Jerusalem above.

In Revelation, chapter 21, we have this peculiar mixture of images. In verses one and two, it says, I saw the new heaven and the new earth for the first heaven and first earth had passed away. There is also no more sea.

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Now, that's a very strange mixture of

images. How can you picture a city dressed like a bride? Where do you buy a bridal gown that fits a city? What shape is it? A city doesn't have a human form.

It's a strange mixture. But it's because both the image of the city of Jerusalem and of the bride are metaphors that apply to the same entity. And we see what that is as we look at verse nine.

Revelation 21, nine and ten. It says, then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, Come, I'll show you the bride, the lamb's wife. Well, who would that possibly be? The lamb is Jesus, who is his bride, the church.

And so he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Now, the imagery is very symbolic, but obviously the city is said to be the lamb's wife. The lamb is Christ.

The wife is the church. The city is the church. I believe it's the church in future glory, not in its present state.

But the point is, New Jerusalem, Jerusalem in the New Testament, Zion in the New Testament, is us. And where do they get that idea? Certainly their Bible was the Old Testament, and obviously the book of the Old Testament they liked best among the prophets was Isaiah. They must have found in Isaiah references to the church as Zion and as Jerusalem to inform them, and rightly so.

They did. Let's look at some passages in Isaiah where the nation, the church, is referred to by these kinds of terms. Now, I should point out that you might say, why do you call the church a nation? Why not just call it a religion or something like that? Because Jesus didn't start a religion.

The Jews already had a religion, and that didn't work out real well for them. They didn't need more religion. They needed a king.

So he came and established a kingdom. Today we call Christianity one of the great world religions. Christianity is not a religion.

I mean, there is a religion out there that they call Christianity. It's called the institutional church. But what Jesus started, the movement he started, is not a religion.

He never taught his disciples any rituals. He never gave them instructions about how often to attend a sacred building or how to do sacred things. He taught them how to love each other, how to stop being hypocrites, how to give to the poor, how to love your enemies.

I mean, he established a different kind of society, not a religion. And he said it was his

kingdom, and he was the king. A kingdom is a nation.

The church in the Bible is a nation. In 1 Peter 2, it may seem like we've gotten far from Isaiah. We do get far from Isaiah sometimes.

Then we come back. But in 1 Peter 2, verses 9 and 10, Peter is addressing the church, the Christians. He says, but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

The church is a holy nation. We're his own special people that you may proclaim the praises of him in the light of darkness to his marvelous light, who once were not a people. So he's not talking to Israel, because they were once a people.

We're Gentiles. We weren't. But are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

These are allusions especially to Hosea 1 and 2. But it's interesting, the labels given to us are the labels that were given in the Old Testament to Israel. A holy nation, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a chosen race. Those labels all belong to Israel in the Old Testament.

Peter says, they're yours now. You're a nation. And so to speak of the present order of things under the Messiah, the church, is to speak not of a religious system.

The Bible never defines Christianity as a religious system. Never in the epistles, never in Jesus' teaching, never in the Old Testament. Except that sometimes the spiritual worship of the church is in prophecy in the Old Testament, described in terms of Old Testament worship, like offering sacrifices and incense and so forth.

That's simply because that's what conveyed the idea of worship to the Old Testament mind. And there are prophecies in the Bible that talk about New Testament worship, and it describes it as bringing sacrifices and burning incense and those kinds of things, which is not literally the way we worship, but it's the way they worshiped back then. But actually, it's the national character of the church as a kingdom under a king that is emphasized in this imagery.

So in Isaiah chapter 60, verse 11, this whole chapter, by the way, is about the church. In fact, much of the imagery of this chapter is borrowed and carried over into Revelation 21 in the description of the New Jerusalem. This chapter provides a lot of the images for that description in Revelation 21.

It says in verse 11, Therefore your gates shall be opened continually. They shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles and their kings in procession. And in verse 19, The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor brightness shall give light to you by night, but the Lord will be to you an everlasting light

and your God your glory.

What this is is a description of the New Jerusalem that we just saw is the bride of Christ. These phrases we just read are quoted or brought into Revelation 21, verses 23, 25 through 26. In other words, as we read this passage of Isaiah, which sounds like it's about a city, a walled city like Jerusalem that has gates and merchants come into the gates and do their business and so forth, and they bring gifts.

It's all in the language of a physical city. But the book of Revelation, more or less interpreting this for us, applies it to the bride, the Lamb's wife, the church. So we've got city imagery in the language of a physical city, but it's really talking about a spiritual city, the church.

In verse 14 of this chapter says, Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing down to you. All those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet. They shall call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Who? The bride of Christ. The city who is the Lamb's wife. They are called what? The city of the Lord.

That's what Hebrews said. You've come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God. That's the church, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, he says.

So we are called the city of the Lord. We are called Zion of the Holy One of Israel. So this is language that applies to the church, but sounds like it's talking about Jerusalem.

It is not. In the same chapter in verse 18 says, Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders. You shall call your walls salvation and your gates praise.

Now notice we're not talking about real walls and gates. Salvation is not a real wall. Praise is not a real gate.

It's saying this is a spiritual city. It's protected by spiritual fortifications, namely salvation. It is entered spiritually through praise, as it says in Psalm 100, enter into his gates with thanksgiving, into his courts with praise.

You approach God through praise. The walls, the gates, everything about the city is in fact spiritual, described in the language of a physical city and applied, of course, in the New Testament to us, the church. If you look at Isaiah 28, verse 16, it says, therefore, thus says the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion, which in Isaiah's day would speak of the city of Jerusalem, a stone for a foundation.

So Zion is being built upon this foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure

foundation. Whoever believes will not act hastily. Now this is talking about Zion as an institution built on a particular stone, a chosen cornerstone, which as you well know, if you've read the New Testament, is Christ.

This particular verse is quoted and strongly alluded to in many places in the New Testament. 1 Peter 2, 6, Romans 9, 33, Romans 10, 11. These are all places in the New Testament that actually quote this verse and apply it to Christ is the stone.

But it's not just Christ the stone that is in the verse. There's a city built on that stone. There is a Zion that owns that stone as its foundation.

God has laid this cornerstone in Zion as a foundation. And you know, Jesus, when he was talking to the Jews, he said, have you not read in your law, and he quotes Psalm 118, I believe it is, which says, the stone which the builders have rejected has become the head of the new cornerstone. Now this is, I'm pretty sure it's Psalm 118 he quotes there, but the imagery he uses is the builders are the rulers of Israel.

God has provided a stone to be the foundation stone, and they rejected it. The builders rejected that stone, but God didn't. He made a new building out of it.

You see, the stone didn't fit the blueprint the builders were working from. Jesus didn't fit their idea of what a Messiah was supposed to be. God sends them the foundation, the tried stone, the precious cornerstone upon which Zion is to be built.

And the rulers of Zion reject him, but to no avail. He has nonetheless become the head stone, and the head cornerstone. God built Zion anyway without those builders.

God, they rejected him. He just ignored them and built Zion anyway, but it wasn't them. It's a new Zion.

It's built on Jesus. The church is said to be built on Christ as the foundation. You're probably familiar with Paul's statement about that in 1 Corinthians 3, where he's talking about him building the church, planting the church in Corinth.

In verse 11, 1 Corinthians 3, 11, Paul says, for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. He's the foundation of what? Of Zion, of Jerusalem. He's the foundation stone that God gave.

The church is the Zion that is built upon him. In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul again is alluding to this same idea when he says in verse 20, that we Christians have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, which were, of course, appointed by Christ. He's even below them in the foundation.

Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Now that chief cornerstone is, of course, an allusion to what we're talking here in Isaiah 28, 16, and also in Psalm 118. The point

is that Paul sees the church as built upon Christ, and he uses these passages of Isaiah to make his point.

So does Peter. And so we have to conclude that if the New Testament writers are correct, then when Isaiah says Zion, at least in some places, or Jerusalem, he's not talking about physical Jerusalem. He's talking about the church.

Now, why do I hammer this? You might say, well, that's easy. Let's move on to the next point. I guess I might dwell on this more than I need to for some audiences, but you have to realize I come from a dispensational background.

And so do most evangelicals that I hear and run into. Certainly not all. But perhaps too many.

As a dispensationalist, I was taught that the one thing that Christian scholars had gotten wrong for 1,800 years, until 1830 came along, Christian teachers had gotten one thing really wrong. They thought that Zion and Jerusalem is the church. And dispensationalism comes along in 1830 and says, no, no, no, no, no.

We have to take things literally. You're twisting scripture unless you take things literally. Therefore, when you see Zion and Jerusalem, it has to be physical Zion, physical Jerusalem.

And from that commitment rose the dispensationalist idea that in the last days, these prophecies will be fulfilled in geographical Israel. In physical Jerusalem on Mount Zion. In other words, when they see Zion and Jerusalem, they say that's gotta be the literal Mount Zion.

Of course, if you say why, then you stump them. Because there's really no reason that would justify that approach. Except that it's, I think they'd probably just say, well, it's intuitive.

You know what I mean? If God says what he means, he means what he says. If he says it's Jerusalem, he means Jerusalem. Well, then you don't recognize the many, many ways in which symbolic and spiritualized language is used in the prophets.

You're gonna get yourself in a lot of trouble with that kind of, you know, blinders on. You're gonna think that Jesus is gonna be a literal shepherd instead of a carpenter. You're gonna think he's gonna be a literal lamb.

You're gonna think he's gonna be a literal shoot growing up out of dry ground, a sprig. You're gonna think that he's gonna be a branch on a tree. You're gonna think that he's gonna be a stone.

If you don't take the language symbolically when it needs to be taken symbolically,

you're gonna make all kinds of mistakes. And that includes if you don't understand when Zion and Jerusalem mean the church. You know, I say, well, how in the world can we know? Sometimes it seems to mean the physical, and sometimes you're saying it means the church.

Well, the key is not too difficult. When it's talking about the Messianic age, it's the church. When it's talking about Isaiah's time or Old Testament times, it's probably not.

And there is maybe one exception to that. And that is when the passage is talking about the church, but also talking about the destruction of the old order. There are passages where these two themes overlap.

Zechariah 14 is a very good example. Jerusalem is mentioned several times in Zechariah 14. The passage is about the transition, the downfall of the old order and the institution of the new order.

And early in the chapter, Jerusalem clearly means physical Jerusalem. And ravishing the women and burning down the city and so forth. But later, Jerusalem is all blessed and good.

And in the context, it is my understanding that the Jerusalem later in the chapter is the church, as it is so frequently in the Old Testament. But I'll have to justify that on another occasion. We're not in Zechariah today.

And by the way, if we were, we'd have to devote at least one whole session just to that one chapter. That's the most difficult chapter in Zechariah, as almost everyone agrees, chapter 14. But it is my opinion, which is not just coming from the top of my head.

It comes from having taught through Zechariah 20 times and having studied it through 50 times, which doesn't mean I'm right. It just means I haven't come to a snap judgment. It is my consideration that Jerusalem in Zechariah 14 early is a reference to Jerusalem in A.D. 70, coming under destruction, where later in the chapter, Jerusalem is the church.

And that is, though there is a certain amount of subjectivity in my judgment about that, but it's not out of thin air. It's because of this tendency we see in the prophets in general to speak of Jerusalem in the new era is the church and use the same words as when it's talking about the old Jerusalem, Zion, Jerusalem, Israel. Under the old covenant, it's physical.

Under the new covenant, it's spiritual. That's really what it comes down to, I believe. All right, now, there's reference to the restoration of Zion in Isaiah, which I believe refers to the church.

In Isaiah 52, verses 1 through 3, it says, Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. For the uncircumcised and the

unclean shall no longer come to you.

Shake yourself from the dust. Arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

For thus says the Lord, you have sold yourselves for nothing and you shall be redeemed without money. Now, this is a situation I've mentioned earlier where you've got a passage which seems to be addressed to the exiles in Babylon about their release. It doesn't mention Babylon per se, but it mentions the captive daughter of Zion.

That is Judah in captivity. And he says, Arise, shake off your dust and free yourself. In a certain generation of readers, would seem to speak of the Babylonian exiles being commanded to free themselves and go back to Jerusalem.

However, as I've said, the motif of the return of exiles from Babylon is often intermixed in the prophets with that of the salvation which is in Christ, and therefore has sort of a typological value. The return of the exiles from Babylon typologically pictures the salvation we have, and therefore the rescue of physical Zion from the Babylonian exile is like the salvation of the spiritual Zion. That statement, especially at the end of verse 3, you shall be redeemed without money.

Peter seems to have that in mind. In 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 18, it says, you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ. 1 Peter 1, 18 and 19.

Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold from the aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot. See, purchase without money, redeemed without money, Peter makes an emphasis that it isn't money that redeemed us, it's the blood of Christ. And so, in this prediction, I believe there is not only a reference to the exiles from Babylon, but also a reference to redemption in Christ and the forming of the new Zion that is redeemed by him.

In the same chapter, verses 7 through 9, it says, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns. And it goes on. And it says in verse 9, break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.

Now, again, we don't have to wonder what this is talking about, because verse 7 is quoted in the New Testament. Paul quotes it in Romans 10 and verse 15. And he applies it to the gospel being carried out in his own day and in ours.

In other words, the present age, the expansion of the gospel to the world is referred to by the one who carries the good news, the beautiful feet of him who crosses the

mountains and crosses the earth to bring good news. What a beautiful thing that is. You can see that this is applicable to the present age, at least the New Testament writers thought it was.

And I'll go with them. In the context, it says God has redeemed Jerusalem. Well, yeah.

When Cyrus let the people go back from Babylon, Jerusalem was rebuilt. In a sense, he redeemed the captives from slavery in Babylon and restored Jerusalem. But this is talking about something beyond that.

This is talking about good news preached to the nations. And it's the good news is the redemption of Jerusalem. God has redeemed the people who are now the new Jerusalem.

And so the church is in view. Now, we're just about out of time, but maybe the most important passage along these lines that we have to look at is Isaiah chapter 2. One of the most famous Messianic age passages. It's short, but thick, like some of us.

In Isaiah chapter 2, verses 2 through 4, Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house, which would of course be Zion, shall be established on the top of the mountains. That's interesting. Taking Mount Zion and sticking it on top of the other mountains in the world.

Doesn't sound literal. And shall be exalted above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it. To what? To Mount Zion.

And many people shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways. And we shall walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations and shall rebuke many people. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Now this is a famous messianic age passage. It is the first one to appear in the book of Isaiah. It is the first of many.

I have said that these passages apply to the current age of the church. The alternative view is it describes a phenomenon that will occur when Jesus comes back in a new millennial kingdom after Jesus comes back. Clearly what sounds, if we take it with anything like literalness, we would have to say, well, this hasn't happened yet.

The nation is not beating their swords into plowshares and their spears to prune hooks. In fact, nations don't even have swords and spears anymore to beat into those things. Obviously, the language isn't literal.

But it does say nations won't learn war anymore. Well, that can't be literally true because in the book of Revelation, when it talks about the millennium, at the end of the millennium, the nations come to make war again. They surround the beloved city.

If this is describing the millennial reign, how can it say they won't learn war anymore when the only description of the millennium in the Bible, Revelation 20, says at the end of that period they will? What is this talking about then? Well, as I've said, I believe it's the church. Let me justify that if I could. First of all, the main justification for that is that although this passage is never quoted in the New Testament, it is one of a genre of passages that occur frequently in the Old Testament which are quoted in the New Testament.

And with an almost boring consistency, there's never any surprise in the application of the New Testament writers of these passages like this one. They didn't use this one, but they did almost all the others, or at least most of the others, when they apply it to the age of the church. So we have reason to believe that had they quoted from this passage, they would have applied it the same way.

Now, how could this apply to the church? Well, certainly not literally. It talks about nations flowing like a river upstream up a hill to a mountain that's been set on top of all the other mountains. Now, a mountain is a typical biblical image for a government or a kingdom, frequent reference to kingdoms as mountains.

And to say that the mountain of the Lord's house will be exalted and on top of all the other mountains would mean that God's government will be above all other governments. That is more authoritative. Jesus, when he rose from the dead, said, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

So indeed, this is so. God's government under Christ is above all other governments, all authority in heaven and earth are under his rule. Now, not later, Jesus didn't say will be when I come back.

He said, it has been given to me all authority in heaven and earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations. What's that mean? Go and teach them to observe what I've commanded you.

Isn't that what we read about here? The nations come to learn what God has commanded and to walk in his ways. Gentiles, all nations coming into the church, into the body of Christ, Zion, to the house of God. This is the mountain of the house of the Lord.

I won't take the time now because the time is not available to us, but in the New Testament, the house of God is a common expression. Never does it refer to anything, at least after the cross, it doesn't apply to anything except the church. In Hebrews 3.10, if

I'm not mistaken, the writer says that Christ is the head over his own house, whose house we are.

We, the church, are his house. In 1 Timothy 3.15, I think it is 1.15, Paul said, if I'm delayed, I want that you would know how to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The house of God is the church.

Peter said of us that we like living stones are built up into a spiritual house. 1 Peter 2.5 and elsewhere. There are numerous places.

We saw a moment ago, Ephesians 2.20, where Paul says, we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. He goes on to say in which the whole house grows into a holy habitation of God through the spirit. In other words, we're a temple.

We are the living stones being built into it. We're the house of God. Never does the term apply to anything other than the church in the New Testament after the cross.

So this is talking about the new covenant age. The house of the Lord is us made of living stones, seen as a worshiping community, a temple, but also seen as a mountain, a government, a kingdom and it's a worshiping community, a mountain and a house of worship. And all the nations fly, flow, come into this.

Now, it doesn't say every last man will come in. It's just that the Gentiles from all over the world come in. This has been happening for 2,000 years.

Gentiles from every nation have been coming into the kingdom of God, into what we call the body of Christ, the church. Now, it says they will say, come, let us go to the mountain of the house of the Lord. The God of Jacob will learn his ways.

That's exactly what's supposed to be going on. The church is supposed to be an educational institution. It has, of course, deviated from that for perhaps purposes of church growth or other things, but the real church has always been, and it's sometimes hard to find, but the real church is where disciples are being made and they're being made by teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Jesus Christ has commanded.

Those who are being taught to obey God and learning his ways, they are in this Mount Zion. They are the true church, the true disciples of Jesus. This is going on, but what about this business, they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and nation or Gentile will not lift up sword against Gentile, neither will they make war anymore.

Well, if this is on the national scale and universal, absolute, all-inclusive, we certainly haven't seen this happen, but it doesn't say that. It says the same nations that flow in

and who learn his ways don't fight each other anymore. They take implements of war, spears and swords, and they beat them into implements of farming, of cultivation.

The kingdom of God in the Old Testament when it was Israel was defended and so forth like other kingdoms by warfare. The kingdom of God now is not advanced through that kind of warfare. It's advanced by sowing seeds, by cultivating.

A sower went out to sow. What did he sow? He sowed the word of God, the word of the kingdom, and it grew. Many of the parables describe the kingdom of God as a field.

Paul described the church of Corinth when he was talking to them in 1 Corinthians 3.9. He said, you are God's field. You are God's building. Two images that we've encountered in this very lecture.

The church is God's field. We no longer gain our point at the edge of the sword with people that we disagree with, and especially those of other nations who have come into the kingdom with us. We're not fighting them anymore.

There are Israeli Christians and Arab Christians who hated each other, but they come into Christ, and they love each other. Now, Germans and Jews, Japanese and Koreans, people who formerly had hostilities and might still have those hostilities if they didn't come into Christ, but when they come into Christ, they put away their hostilities. They trade in their warfare with each other for implements of mutual cultivation.

It's farming, not fighting. Now, for those who are in the kingdom, not for everybody around the world. Unfortunately, not everyone has come into the kingdom yet.

Post-millennialists believe that everyone will someday. I guess that remains to be seen. I'm not convinced that it will happen to be wonderful if it does.

Then this would be universal, it's just that all Gentile nations will provide this stream of influx into the kingdom of God. Those who there are disciplined, those who are taught to keep his ways, they don't fight anymore. They put away their aggressions and their hostilities, and they cultivate one another.

They don't learn war anymore. Now, those who don't come into Zion are still making war out there. But those who are inside do not.

Now, some of you might say, well, aren't you a little bit naive, Steve? Hasn't the Church kind of been at war with the nations? Didn't the Catholic Church do the Inquisitions and the Crusades? Wasn't there a 30-year war in Europe between Protestants and Catholics? What about North Ireland? How can you say Christians don't make war? I'll stand by what the Bible says. Christians don't. The Bible says if you come into Mount Zion and you don't keep your ways, you put away your weapons.

You don't go and make war. Now, there may be, I'm not saying Christians have no involvement in the military at all. There's differences of opinion about that.

And there are Christians who have joined the military and are involved in defending their country, but they're not spreading the gospel that way. And I'm not saying whether it's right or wrong for them to do that. There's certainly different views that Christians hold on that particular thing.

And I leave that to every man's conscience. But I would say this, that this is not a contradiction of this. People who are defending the borders of their country against invaders, that's not the same thing as defending Mount Zion.

America is not Zion. England is not Zion. Israel in the Middle East is not Zion.

The Church is Zion, and Christians do not advance the cause of the Church or defend it against aggression by physical force. Those who have done so have departed from what Christ has taught them to do. And therefore, while the institutional church has often been involved in wars of religion, there are no wars of religion in the kingdom of God.

Therefore, any organization that involves itself in a war of religion is not in the kingdom of God, because those who are learn not to do that anymore, because they learn the ways of Christ. And that is what is predicted here. It is the Zion, the Jerusalem, that is the body of Christ that is pictured there and elsewhere in such passages, which we shall see on other occasions as we go through the book later on.