

THE SAVIOUR'S GREAT PROMISE TO ISRAEL RESTORATION: REPENTANT BACKSLIDERS WOULD RETURN TO HIM

ISAIAH 54:01–17

Introduction

To *backslide* means to revert to a worse condition, to lapse morally or to back away from one's practice of religion. When believers backslide, they turn away from the Lord and His holy commandments, which demand righteous living. A backsliding believer returns to the selfishness and sins of the world. A backsliding believer ignores or neglects worship, the reading of God's Word, prayer, witnessing and reaching out to meet the desperate needs of the world. A backsliding believer sometimes slips into immoral, lawless or even violent behaviour. Backsliding shames Christ by giving the world a chance to ridicule and mock His name. How? By presenting a terrible testimony or impression of the Christian life.

Backsliding is the practical subject of the present Scripture. The Israelites were a backsliding people, a people who continually turned away from the Lord to follow the wicked ways and the false gods of the world. Nevertheless, God loved His chosen people, both the believers and the unbelievers. As seen in Isaiah 53, God sent the Saviour into the world to die for the sins of the entire human race. To the world, the Messiah's salvation means the offer of a great invitation (55:1-56:8). To the hypocrites and the wicked of this earth, the Messiah's salvation means a strong warning (58:1-59:21). To Israel, the Messiah's salvation means restoration (54:1-17). This is, The Saviour's Great Promise to Israel — Restoration: Repentant backsliders will return to Him, Isaiah 54:1-17.

- I. The repentant backsliders would be set free and filled with joy (vv. 1-3).
- II. The repentant backsliders would be delivered from fear, shame and disgrace (v. 4).
- III. The repentant backsliders would be reconciled to God (vv. 5-10).
- IV. The repentant backsliders would be given a glorious future: a picture of the Saviour's kingdom (vv. 11-17)

I. *Isaiah 54:01–03 Repentant Backsliders Set Free*

The repentant backsliders would experience joy, and the nation would grow. Israel is the backsliding nation described throughout this passage. Isaiah called Israel a *barren* woman; she was unfruitful and unproductive because she had been an unfaithful wife. Israel had turned away from her husband, God Himself (50:1-3; 62:4; Jer. 3:8; Hos. 2:1f; Eze. 16:1f; 23:1f). She had broken her vow to be faithful to the Lord, to belong to Him and Him alone. The people had turned away from the Lord to live as they wanted and to do their own thing, which meant embracing false gods and committing acts of wickedness.

So far as godliness and righteousness were concerned, the nation had been drained. The people had become utterly *barren*. For that reason, the Lord had to abandon the Israelites. Because of her sin, the nation was destroyed and the citizens taken captive by Babylon.

However, the day was coming when backsliding Israel would return to the Lord, experiencing joy and great growth within the nation. As a result of the war and the hardship of their exile, the Israelite population was greatly diminished. But when the Israelites were set free from Babylonian captivity and allowed to return to the promised land, they would grow in numbers. They would be fruitful and reproduce their population. Although the immediate occasion for this prophecy was Israel's restoration to the promised land after their captivity in Babylon, the prophecy will not be totally fulfilled until the Messiah returns to set up God's kingdom on earth. No expansion in the history of Israel has ever come close to the population explosion described in these verses. Yet, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to set up God's kingdom on earth, Israel will need to enlarge her tents even more to make room for the growing population.

But just who is the population? Does this verse refer only to the true believers of Israel, or is it a reference to all believers of all nations? Clearly, the Scripture carries a double application. It refers both to the Jews who were returning from Babylonian captivity and to all the citizens who will live in the kingdom of Christ when He returns to earth. In fact, this is exactly what other Scriptures say. The apostle Paul applies this passage to all believers of all nations when he says that the heavenly Jerusalem is the mother of all believers (Gal. 4:26-27; also see Heb. 12:22). What is being described is the enormous number of Gentile believers birthed through the witness of the early church, which consisted of the apostles and the earliest Jewish believers. Down through the centuries, the number of believers has grown significantly. And when Christ returns to earth, believers will do exactly what verse three says: they will spread out over the entire earth, settling in all the nations and cities of the world. Keep in mind that only believers will be allowed to live on earth when Christ returns to set up God's kingdom.

Thought 1. God warns us against backsliding, against turning away from Him. Far too many of us have turned to this world and its wicked ways instead of remaining true to the Lord. Think how many of us have forsaken the Lord for the pleasures, power, fame, possessions and wealth of this world. Think how many of us have worshipped so-called gods — the sun, moon and stars; celebrities, heroes and other public figures; television, movies, music and so on — rather than the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only living and true God. God has given us His Holy Word in the Bible, and His Word is sufficient to meet every need we have. Still, far too many of us have backslidden by abandoning God, committing adultery with this world and its false gods.

1) Listen to God's warning against backsliding.

Mat 24:12 "*Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.*"

Luke 9:62 *Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

Rom 1:18 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*

Rom 1:28-32 *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

Gal 4:9 *But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

Heb 10:38 *But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.*

1 John 2:19 *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*

Rev 2:4 *“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”*

Prov 14:14 *The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways.*

2) Listen to the wonderful promises God makes to backsliders who repent and return to Him.

Mat 5:4 *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”*

Luke 15:7 *“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*

John 16:24 *“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

John 16:23-24 *“In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

2 Cor 7:10 *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

2 Chr 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Psa 16:11 *You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Psa 34:18 *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psa 126:5 *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.*

Isa 12:3 *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

Isa 35:10 *And the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Isa 66:2 *“Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.”*

Jer 3:22 *“Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.” “Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God.”*

Ezek 18:21 *“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”*

Ezek 18:31 *“Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?”*

II. Isaiah 54:04 Repentant Backsliders Delivered from Fear and Disgrace

The repentant backsliders would be delivered from fear, shame and humiliation. This promise and the great promises given above seem far-fetched and hard to believe. At the time of this prophecy the Israelites were in bondage, held captive by Babylon. From all appearances, they would continue to live in the fear of daily oppression, hardship and deprivation. And as slaves to Babylon, they would continue to bear the shame and disgrace

of their bondage. Remember that their enslavement was due to their continual rejection of God and their wicked behaviour down through the centuries from the time they were a young nation. Nevertheless the wonderful promise of God to backsliding Israel was *deliverance*. Some day in the future they would repent and return to the Lord.

- a. In that day, they would no longer fear the oppression of enemies or of any other trial or seductive temptation. Fear would be erased from their hearts and replaced with a spirit of peace and complete confidence in the Lord's care.
- b. In that day, the shame of sin would no longer be remembered, neither the transgressions of youth, nor the sins committed as an adult. Israel's youth probably refers to the entire history of the nation from its birth at Mount Sinai until the time of the Babylonian captivity, the time of this present Scripture.

=> The nation's childhood would have been its birth beginning with Abraham up until the time the people were formed into a nation under Moses.

=> The adult life of the nation would most likely stand for the time between Christ's coming and the end of human history.

Whatever the case, the shame of Israel's sins as a young nation plagued the people up through the Babylonian captivity. But a wonderful promise was being given to them in this Scripture: the day was coming when the shame of their youthful sins would no longer be remembered. Their transgressions and all the disgrace and oppression that occurred because of them would be erased from their minds. Of course, this will take place when the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, returns to earth to establish the kingdom of God.

- c. In that day, the humiliation of enslavement, of being held in bondage, would also be erased. The word *widowhood* refers to the time Israel abandoned the LORD (her husband) and committed spiritual adultery against Him by turning to other gods and to the wickedness of this world. Forsaking God is just as disgraceful as a woman forsaking her husband to commit adultery with another man. But when Christ returns, the disgrace of forsaking the LORD will be removed and remembered no more.

Thought 1. These same three promises are applicable to us. God will accept all backsliders who truly return to Him in repentance. He will deliver them from fear, shame and humiliation.

- 1) Backsliders who truly repent will be delivered from fear — the fear of oppression from enemies, trials and seductive temptations. God's presence and power will fill believers, strengthening them to conquer their fear. However, believers must trust the Lord, truly follow Him, and draw close to Him in times of trial and temptation. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about fear:

Mat 10:30-31 *“And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”*

2 Tim 1:7 *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

Rev 1:17-18 *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*

Psa 3:5-6 *I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustained me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.*

Psa 27:1-3 *The LORD is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.*

Psa 91:2-6 *I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.*

Psa 118:6 *The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?*

Prov 3:24 *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*

Isa 12:2 *Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 43:1-3 *But now, this is what the LORD says he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.*

- 2) Backsliders who truly repent will be delivered from the shame of sin. When professing believers live worldly lives of sinful pleasure, immorality, greed and covetousness and engage in lying, stealing and cheating, they are hypocrites. Professing one thing, they do something else. By their false profession they are attempting to deceive others, but they are only deceiving themselves and smearing God's name and holy character. Sadly, sin does not always cause a person to sense shame, and many people do not even consider sin shameful. Nonetheless, all sins are degrading acts of treachery to God. In His eyes, every wrongdoing committed is a shameful, humiliating, contemptible act and each act places a stigma of shame upon the world, magnifying the spirit of wickedness, lawlessness, violence and immorality that is sweeping across the earth.

In spite of everything, though, God will forgive our sins. This verse gives us His wonderful promise. God will erase the shame of sin from our lives. Our task is to repent of our backsliding. Listen to the Lord's wonderful promise concerning the forgiveness of sins:

Luke 24:46-47 *He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 5:30-32 *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead — whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Isa 43:25 *"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Jer 3:22 *"Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding." "Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD our God."*

- 3) Backsliders who truly repent will be delivered from the humiliation of bondage. The entire world is held in bondage to sin. No person can keep from sinning nor can any person live a sinless life. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Tragically, many of us are held in bondage to sinful habits: alcohol, drugs, smoking, sexual immorality, stealing, lying, gluttony, cursing and a host of other enslaving sins.

To be enslaved to any wicked behaviour is an utter disgrace, for it shows lack of discipline and self-control. To be controlled or manipulated by any sinful or harmful behaviour exposes a weak mind or a heart hardened toward God. But again God makes a wonderful promise to us: He will deliver us from the humiliation of bondage. However, His promise is conditional. As long as we live out in the world and continue to forsake the Lord, He cannot help us. But if we return to Him, He will help us. Through Christ, He will remove the dishonour and humiliation of our bondage to sin. Listen to the promises of God's Holy Word:

Gal 1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

1 Pet 2:24-25 *"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

1 John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

III. Isaiah 54:05–10 Repentant Backsliders Reconciled to God

The repentant backsliders would be reconciled to God. Note that reconciliation is initiated by God Himself, "your Maker" and "your husband." This is a startling statement, for it claims that the bond between God and His people is just like the loving bond between a husband and his wife. As their *Maker* who truly loves them, God could never abandon His people to their enemies or to the enslaving power of their sin. He was bound to be reaching out to His wayward people, longing for them to return to Him. God has the power to reconcile backsliders to Him because He is the *LORD of hosts*, the *LORD Almighty* who

controls all beings in both heaven and earth. God is also the *Holy One* of Israel, which means that He is flawless and righteous. He will always do the right thing, always show His love by accepting backsliders who return to Him. Moreover, God is the *Redeemer*, which means that His very nature is to save His people from their enemies and from the sins of the world. Note who the Redeemer is: He is *God of all the earth*. It is He who seeks to be reconciled to His people who have gone astray. They, or anyone else for that matter, can be reconciled and have a relationship with the *God of all the earth*. What a staggering thought! That is the promise of this passage.

Like a loving husband, the LORD calls His people to return to His arms. Despite the fact that His people had abandoned Him for the gods and wickedness of this world, He still desired to be reconciled to them. Note the stress upon God's love for His people. His love is like the love of a young married man who is ardently attracted to and single-minded in the pursuit of his wife. God is passionately in love with His people and longs for close fellowship and communion with them. Even when God's people drift away, He seeks after them with the hope that they will return to Him.

Even as the love of God is stressed, His justice must be acknowledged as well. Sin can arouse His anger and force Him to act (vv. 7-8). God will chastise any of His people who turn away from Him. When believers are unfaithful and commit spiritual adultery by turning to false gods or to the sins of this world, God will discipline them. God will abandon and hide His face from carnal, worldly sinners, but only for a short time.

God is merciful and compassionate (vv. 7-8). For that reason He assures His backsliding people that He will show mercy to them. Although they may seem far away by living in unbelief and sin, the day is coming when God will take His people back. He will receive all who repent and turn back to Him. No longer will He hide His face in anger against them; instead, He will have compassion and redeem them (v. 8).

The LORD's sworn oath guarantees this reconciliation (vv. 9-10). The day is coming when the LORD will never again rebuke or be angry with His people. This oath is more sure than the oath God swore to Noah when He promised to never again judge the earth with a worldwide flood. And it is more sure than the presence of the mountains and hills, which are sometimes shaken and removed. In summary, God will never take His unfailing peace and love from His people (v. 10).

Thought 1. God loves His people and longs to be reconciled to every individual who has strayed from Him. Backsliders are those who have deserted God, turned away from Him to form adulterous relationships with the sinful world and the gods of false religion. When backsliders abandon God, they wound His heart and cause Him excruciating pain, all because God loves His people and longs for a close relationship with them. He wants His people to continually speak to Him through prayer and listen to Him by meditating on His Holy Word. And He wants His people to obey Him, for

His commandments tell a person how to live a victorious, productive and meaningful life. When we drift away, the Lord reaches out to us in love. He wants us to forsake our adulterous, sinful ways and return to Him. If we will return from our backsliding, the Lord will have mercy upon us. He is perfectly willing to be reconciled to any backslider. But we must know this one fact: reconciliation comes only through Jesus Christ. In other words, if we desire to be reconciled to God, we must approach Him through Christ. Christ alone has brought peace between God and the human race. Christ alone can forgive our sins, for He alone died for the sins of the world. Reconciliation with God is possible only if we approach the Father through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Rom 5:8-10 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

2 Cor 5:17-21 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Eph 2:4-5 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.*

Eph 2:13-16 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace. And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

Col 1:14 *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Col 1:20-22 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you*

were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

Heb 2:17-18 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

IV. Isaiah 54:11–17 Repentant Backsliders' Glorious Future

The repentant backsliders would be given a glorious future. This Scripture is clearly describing a society far beyond any ever known on earth. God is giving an unmistakable picture of the kingdom that will be established in the future when Christ returns to earth. Note that the prophecy is addressed to Jerusalem, the afflicted city that has been battered by army after army, hardly ever knowing a moment of peace or comfort. God has wonderful news for this downtrodden city: it has been destined for a glorious future. This fact may stun and dumbfound many in the world; nevertheless, Jerusalem is to become the capital of the Messiah's kingdom when He returns to earth. Note exactly what is said in these verses:

- a. The citizens of the New Jerusalem will live in a city of unparalleled beauty and value. God Himself will build the city using only the finest and most valuable materials. The city will be so glorious that it will be indescribable. Thus, Isaiah uses the most precious stones on earth to picture what the New Jerusalem will look like. All buildings in the city will be constructed from precious jewels, and the foundations will be laid with sapphires. All the towers and pentacles will be made of sparkling rubies, while the gates and walls will be made of other precious jewels and crystal. Remember that all stones and rocks in the universe deteriorate and eventually waste away. But the sparkling jewels used to construct the Holy City will be incorruptible. Therefore, the chemical makeup of God's incorruptible throne is unknown to man. A study of *Revelation*, both the Scripture and commentary, is helpful in understanding the New Jerusalem (see notes, Rev 21:9-23).
- b. The citizens of the New Jerusalem will be taught by the LORD Himself. As a result, their hearts will be flooded with the peace of God. God's *peace* suggests a victorious life free from the oppression of enemies, trials and temptations. Also suggested are well-being, good health and prosperity in all things. The peace of God means to be free from all restlessness, disturbance, instability, anxiety, distress, discouragement, depression, weakness and any other feeling or emotion that creates problems for people. God's peace means inward strength, purpose, meaning, significance and a deep sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. It means living a victorious, conquering and

triumphant life that is full of meaning and purpose. Listen to what other Scriptures say about God's peace:

John 14:27 *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Eph 2:13-14 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

Phil 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Psa 29:11 *The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.*

Psa 119:165 *Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.*

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

Isa 48:18 *If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

- c. The citizens of the New Jerusalem will live in a righteous society, for the LORD Himself will establish a fair and just government that shows no partiality or favouritism. There will be no prejudice or discrimination in the New Jerusalem. There will be no evil or lawlessness running rampant throughout society. Tyranny and violence will be gone forever. Within society there will be nothing whatsoever to fear. The righteous, fair and just society of Christ's kingdom is exactly the kind of society that God admonishes us to be building today.
- d. The citizens of the New Jerusalem will be protected (vv. 15-17a). No nation will be allowed to defeat God's people when Christ establishes God's kingdom on earth. In fact, no nation will be allowed to assemble for the purpose of waging war. In the past, God raised up and used the nations as His agents to execute justice in the world. But in

the Messiah's kingdom, God will not allow an attack against His people. No weapon will be forged to be used in war. Not even a verbal attack will be allowed against God's people. Peace will rule within the hearts and minds of people and within their social relationships. God will personally protect His people.

Even today, God promises security to His people. He promises to protect those who truly believe and follow Him. In all trials and sufferings God is present with His people. He carries them or walks with them through every possible hardship if they call upon him. Even when they face death, He promises to be with them and to transfer them into His presence. Quicker than the eye can blink, true believers are taken from this earth into the presence of God Himself.

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Rom 8:35, 37-39 *Who shall separate us from the love [compassion] of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Heb 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

1 John 5:4-5 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

2 Chr 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.*

Gen. 28:15 *"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*

Psa 34:7 *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.*

Psa 91:4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psa 91:5 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day.

Psa 112:7 They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

Psa 125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore.

Prov 3:24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

Isa 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isa 46:4 Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

- e. The citizens of Jerusalem as well as all other believers will have a glorious future in Jerusalem. This promise is guaranteed by God's Holy Word (v. 17b). All these blessings are to be the heritage of those who serve the LORD. All true servants of God — genuine believers — will inherit the New Jerusalem, be taught by the LORD, and be flooded with His peace. And they will live in a righteous society under a fair and just government. Moreover, God Himself will protect them. These promises, this heritage, is guaranteed by God's very own Word.

Acts 20:32 Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Col 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Col 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

1 Pet 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you. ■