

more intense and translated *hold fast* as when Hagar was told to *hold fast* to Ishmael (Gen. 21:18) or when Pharaoh was *holding* on to the Israelites (Ex. 9:2). So now their sin is consuming them—they are suffering the due penalty of their sins (cf. Rom. 1:28), and the nation as a whole does not turn to God and hold fast to Him for strength—it is going to be blown away into captivity.

## 5. PLEA FOR VERIFICATION

TEXT: 64:8-12

- 8 But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.  
 9 Be not wroth very sore, O Jehovah, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.  
 10 Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.  
 11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste.  
 12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

## QUERIES

- a. Is there a change in attitude here?
- b. Is Jerusalem a desolation at this writing?
- c. What is their "beautiful house"?

## PARAPHRASE

Now, Lord, we are pleading that You will intervene directly and relieve our present circumstances because, First, You alone

are our Father. We are clay and You are our Former or Potter, the One who formed us with Your own hand. You should not be so angry with us, or keep on holding our sins against us, Lord, because we are begging You to remember, we are Your children. Second, the cities and villages of Your consecrated land, (even Zion, Jerusalem, the city where Your presence dwells) are being desecrated, profaned and ruined by Your enemies. And if they are not stopped, our beautiful temple, Your house, where our ancestors worshipped You is as good as ruined by the fires of our enemies. All our beautiful, peaceful land will be made a place of desolation and ruin. In view of all this, will You still withhold Your judgment upon our enemies and refrain from intervening for us and allow us to continue to be afflicted?

#### COMMENTS

v. 8-9 OWNERSHIP: This last section of the petition of Zion, born of her restlessness, is a plea for Jehovah to verify His relationship to her. She offers two motives she thinks should move Jehovah to act and intervene directly to relieve her circumstances. First, the Lord should act immediately and supernaturally, on her behalf, because they have no other Father than Jehovah. The emphasis is on His exclusive Fatherhood. The literal Hebrew syntax would read, "And, even so, Father of us You are, we are clay and You are former of us, and work of Your hand all of us are." Despite their uncleanness and their sin, Jehovah formed them like a potter forms clay. They now fall back upon that relationship as a last resort. This was not always their attitude. Once they refused to admit the potter-clay relationship (cf. Isa. 29:16; 45:9-10)! That was when they thought they needed no help. But now it is a different story! Now they plead for His mercy and His immediate and direct help *because* they have suddenly realized He is the *only* Father they have!

Before we thank God that we are not like those people, let

us remember that we have undoubtedly been as arrogant and then as helpless as they at one time or another in our Christian walk. All of us have tried, with Peter, to walk on the stormy sea of life by ourselves at one time; all of us have probably cried out as we began to sink, "Lord save me!" (cf. Mt. 14:29-31). But actually, this is where God wants us! This is where He wanted Zion! He could not save them until they allowed Him to do so. Of course, most of us want Him to save us right now, and according to our human program. But Jehovah is not only omnipotent, He is omniscient. His knowledge of what we need and when we need it is perfect. He is indeed our perfect Father.

A literal translation of verse nine would read, "Do not be angry, Jehovah, unto strength, and do not eternally remember our sin." In other words, they are pleading that Jehovah not carry out His anger as *strongly* as He is capable of doing. That would obliterate them! Their plea is that they are His *people*. Their appeal is that Jehovah verify their status as His chosen people by intervening and saving them from impending captivity. Jehovah will deliver them from captivity and verify their election as His children when they do their part to verify their relationship to Him by obedience to His will as children should. Will Jehovah claim them as children? Yes, when they claim Him as Father! Will He verify they are His? Yes, when they verify He is theirs! Will He deliver them! Yes, when they allow Him to do so and when it is best for Him to do so! Ezekiel (Ezek. 20:1-49) predicts this very thing! God does have a remnant and He will verify His ownership!

v. 10-12 OMNIPOTENCE: The second motive Zion thinks should move Jehovah to act immediately on her behalf is the continuing plunder of Judah's cities and villages by the Assyrians. This continuing plunder portends an even more disastrous day when the Temple may be put to the torch and the holy city itself, beautiful Jerusalem, may be overrun and ruined by the heathen hordes. It was evidently so imminent that the prophet spoke of it as if it were already happening! Jerusalem and the Temple were not completely destroyed and burned

until 586 when Nebuchadnezzar razed the whole city (cf. Jer. 52:13). Isaiah is not writing after the fact but using the “predictive present.”

The statement in verse 12 sums up and presses home the point Zion is pleading—need for immediate, direct intervention by Jehovah to deliver her from her enemies. God must not allow the land and the people who bear His name to be profaned lest His name be profaned throughout the world. Jehovah has acted in the past to vindicate His power and glorify His name; will He now remain silent? The Hebrew word *khesheh* is translated *peace* in verse 12, but more literally means *silence*. The usual Hebrew word for *peace* is *shalom*. The phrase ‘*ad-me’od* which means, “. . . unto strength . . .” is repeated in this verse. In view of the continued plundering of the cities and the imminent razing of Jerusalem and the Temple, will Jehovah continue to keep silent and continue to afflict Judah so severely? Indeed He will so long as Judah keeps on walking in sin. One has only to read Jeremiah and Ezekiel to know that Judah not only continued but worsened in her sin and rebellion (cf. Ezek. 5:5-6; 8:7-18) until finally Jehovah withdrew His glory from her altogether (Ezek. 11:22-25).

For the sake of His name and the faithfulness of a small remnant, Jehovah delivered His people from their captivity and rebuilt their city and their temple. However, the rebuilt Jerusalem and Zerubbabel’s temple were temporary edifices used by the Lord to the ultimate end He sought and that was a “dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22), the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the church the presence of the Lord dwells now and forever more. An earthly Jerusalem and an earthly temple are now of no consequence to God and His people. Those who worship Him now and forever more worship in Spirit and in truth (cf. Jn. 4:19-26).

### QUIZ

1. What is the aim of Zion’s petition in these verses?
2. To what relationship does Zion appeal in her plea?

3. Does God want men to come to such helplessness as Zion exhibited here?
4. Why does Zion remind the Lord of what is happening to the cities?
5. Did God ever deliver Zion?
6. What was God's ultimate deliverance?

## E. REFINING OF ZION, CHAPTER 65

### 1. CLEANSED

TEXT: 65:1-12

- 1 I am inquired of by them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.
- 2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts;
- 3 a people that provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks;
- 4 that sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of adominable things is in their vessels;
- 5 that say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.
- 6 Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, yea, I will recompense into their bosom,
- 7 your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, that have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I first measure their work into their bosom.
- 8 Thus saith Jehovah, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.