

Come and See My Glory

✦ **In eager survivors with offerings (vv. 18-21)**

✦ **In my new heavens and the new earth (vv. 22-24)**

In the name of Jesus, God's greatest **Glory**, dear bright, shining family of God:

Something has always puzzled me about the last verse of Isaiah. It seems like such a strange way to end Isaiah's long prophecy. Sixty-six chapters would not even fit on one ancient scroll. Isaiah takes two. Some of the Bible's most beautiful, comforting evangelism passages are in Isaiah, especially chapters 40-66 in the *Book of Comfort*. This last section, chapters 58-68, is entitled in one outline: **The Spiritual, Eternal Deliverance**. Why end all that with one of the Bible's most gruesome passages about hell? How does that help people respond to God's invitation: **Come and See My Glory** ?

✦ **In eager survivors with offerings (vv. 18-21)**

So much of this text seems unnatural. For instance, what if you had a friend who always promised to come over, but seldom did? If he never had anything good to say, only complaints about everything you say and do – would you keep him for a friend? Or tell him to “get lost”? The LORD has been speaking through Isaiah about Israelites, God's people, coming over for potluck dinner with molding dishes of pig meat, rats and other creepy things. That was their sacrifices to God. **“They will meet their end together,”** the LORD says. But He does not stop where we would. He goes on: **“And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come....”** To destroy the world? No! God promises that He will **“gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory.”** So in response to Israel's unbelief, the LORD promises to reach out to us Gentiles!

Beautiful Gospel, but what about that last verse?

Now the Lord gets more specific and mentions nations all over the ancient world in Europe, Asia, Africa. He even mentions America as **“the distant islands which have not heard of my fame or seen my glory.”** Much of America seems to have been under water at the time. North America probably looked like **“distant islands”** to the ancient seafarers sailing around the globe. It's not just that they would hear about the one true God. Through Isaiah the Lord says, **“they will proclaim my glory among the nations.”**

Did you figure out this **“sign”** which the Lord promises to set among the nations? What shows God's glory more than the **“sign”** of His own Son, Jesus Christ? A band of special forces might wear a tattoo to signal their brotherhood. God puts a “tattoo” of this **“sign”** on every Christian's head. You can see it in the radiant smiles of Christians all over the world. They are so eager to share God's loving kindness and tender mercy in the forgiveness of sins. These are the “survivors” who have escaped sin's devastation by faith in the One who conquered death by His glorious resurrection.

A Christian layman was pleasantly surprised when he saw this **“sign”** on a fishing trip. You know how people are always asking, “What about those who have not heard?” They should get out more. Along the Rio Negro River, deep in the Amazon jungle, this fisherman came across a village where some of the natives found out he was a Christian. Instead of clubbing him to death or roasting him over a fire, they asked him to read from his English Bible. In the moonlight of the Amazon he was trying to remember what he learned in Catechism and Bible Class, praying God to bless his feeble efforts. God kept His promise: **“Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it.”** (Psalm 81:10) When he and his friend were ready to leave, the natives came down by the river to hug them and say, “We'll see you again in heaven!”

Beautiful Gospel, but what about that last verse?

Here's something else that seems so unnatural in this text. Non-believers like to say, "The church just wants your money." If that were their real complaint, they'd come when we tell them, "Then leave your wallet at home." Can they sense that God wants something far more valuable than their toys?

When the Holy Spirit here inspires Isaiah to talk about "*offerings*," these **eager survivors** are not bringing wagon loads of gold. We'd say, "Planes, trains and automobiles," but they have a cargo much more valuable to God than US dollars or diamonds and emeralds. God says, "***And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD....They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels.***" Can you see what God values most? It's you! He wants your heart and soul in order to fill you with joy and peace. He already sent His Son Jesus to wash your sins away with His holy, precious blood. He already raised Jesus from the dead as a neon "*sign*" to the world that you are justified in God's sight. He already welcomed Jesus back to heaven as the Champion of our souls. Now God wants your heart in a clean body, beautiful and precious in His sight. "***Therefore,...in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.***" (Romans 12:1 NIV84) The best gift you can give to God is a thankful heart.

Beautiful Gospel, but what about that last verse?

Some of you hunters and fisherman, campers and hikers know what it's like to go a few days without a shower. You might not notice yourself when you first walk in, but other noses will. Or if you've ever been in a hospital bed for any length of time, unable to clean and care for yourself, how good it feels when skillful, gentle hands clean you up. God knows how great it feels for us to be clean. He put His bathhouse in the middle of the world on the high hill of Zion in Jerusalem. **Come and See My Glory**, God says. His dear Holy Spirit loves to clean us up with Word and sacrament deep down inside our soul. No shower or sponge bath can reach so deep or feel so good for all eternity.

Beautiful Gospel, but what about that last verse?

✠ **In my new heavens and the new earth (vv. 22-24)**

This is all about the pure joy and happiness of heaven. "***As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,***" declares the LORD, "***so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,***" says the LORD. That's not like the way I was as a little boy asking my Dad if I had to go to church. God got hold of my heart as a teenager, and now I want to go. I'm so grateful for the privilege of coming to God's house on Thursday and Sunday for worship. Heaven needs no church or temple because the Lord Jesus is the temple. We'll hear more about this in next Thursday's sermon.

Beautiful Gospel, but what about that last verse?

Gruesome picture, Christians rejoicing in heaven, "***will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against [God].***" Horror, torment and terror will never end for unbelievers in hell: "***Their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.***"

Some people only understand strength, not dialoging or diplomacy. They despise weakness. In Isaiah 58:1, the LORD commanded: "***Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins.***" Do you really want your auto mechanic to lie; then you break down in rush hour traffic? Do you want only happy doctor talk? Or would you rather be treated? Preachers are not politicians. Every life ends with a warning. Most people don't want to think about this. One funeral director has hundreds of urns with ashes from cremations no one claims. Relatives ignore death. God sends His Son. Christ Jesus dies, then rises again. God sounds the warning with His invitation today: **Come and See My Glory**. Do you believe God? Then who was the last person you warned about where he or she is headed without Christ? God loves you this much. Love as you have been loved. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Shine God's **Glory** in Christ. Amen.