

# God And His Church

**Introduction.** In Ezekiel 33-48, the prophet explores the future, spiritual blessings of Israel. In the specific section of 34:7-31, Ezekiel condemns the leadership of Israel. They were wolves in sheep's clothing. The Lord would deliver Israel from all distress, whether from poor leadership or from the nations. He would do so by appointing one true and responsible Shepherd for His people: the Messiah (cf. Jeremiah 23:3-6; John 10:11).

God's blessings will include more than a new leader, it will bring a new phase of relationship with His people -- a covenant of peace (cf. Isaiah 54:7-10). We are going to examine the statement made in 34:26, for it details a couple of very worthy aspects of the Lord's church.

## I. *The Description*

- A. It is often described as a "hill," no doubt, in reference to the temple being built on the hill of Zion (Psalm 2:6; 3:4; 15:1; 43:3; 99:9).
  1. Zion, which probably means "citadel," occurs over 150 times in the Old Testament. It was one of the hills, located in the southeast section, on which Jerusalem stood.
    - a) It is first mentioned in the Old Testament as a Jebusite fortress (2 Samuel 5:6-9). David captured it and called it the "city of David" (1 Kings 8:1; 2 Chronicles 5:2; 32:30; 33:14). David brought the ark to Zion, and the hill henceforth became sacred (2 Samuel 6:10-12).
    - b) When Solomon later moved the ark to the temple on nearby Mt. Moriah, the name Zion was extended to take in the temple (Isaiah 8:18; 18:7; 24:23; Joel 3:17; Micah 4:7), and it was looked on by the people as the dwelling place of God. Zion later came to stand for the whole of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:21; Psalm 48:2; 69:35; 133:3; Isaiah 1:8).
    - c) Zion played an important role in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (Psalm 2:6; 110:2, 6; Joel 2:32; Isaiah 35:10; 61:3). In one sense, the redeemed have reached Zion, the church, pointed to by the prophets (Revelation 14:1). In another sense, Zion still lies ahead (Revelation 21:2).
  2. The church is known by several names in the New Testament.
    - a) The body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18, 24; 1 Corinthians 12:27).
    - b) The house of God (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6; Ephesians 2:19; 3:15).
    - c) The kingdom of God (Acts 8:12; 20:15; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:12).

- d) The temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; cf. Ephesians 2:20; Romans 9:33).
  - e) The vineyard of the Lord (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; 20:1-16; 21:28-32, 33-46).
- B. The term denotes several other characteristics.
1. Elevation -- the world is sunk, fallen, degraded. The church is raised out of it and exalted by virtue of the call of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).
    - a) The definition of the term "call."
      - (1) It is derived from the verb form *kaleo*. It also appears in the noun form (a calling) and in the adjective form (called) in the New Testament.
      - (2) When the word is used with a personal object, it means "to invite or summon." It is used of the divine call to partake of the blessings of redemption.
    - b) There are several aspects of the nature of our calling.
      - (1) We are called by God (1 Peter 5:10; 2 Timothy 1:7-9; Hebrews 3:1).
      - (2) We are called into the fellowship of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9).
      - (3) We are called to be children of God (Romans 9:25-26; 1 John 3:1).
      - (4) We are called to be saints (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7).
      - (5) We are called to live a holy life (1 Thessalonians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:9).
      - (6) We were called out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9).
        - (a) "Darkness" is representative of moral and spiritual darkness.
        - (b) Vine says, "With the exception of the significance of secrecy, darkness is always used in a bad sense."
    - c) It is our duty to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). If we do, we will be to the praise and glory to God (Ephesians 1:12; Philippians 1:9-11).
  2. Stability -- it is not built upon sand and endangered by every storm, but upon the towering hill that has withstood the blasts of centuries. The mountain of the Lord cannot be moved (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3; Hebrews 12:22-24).
  3. Visibility -- it is a hill to be visible to all in every direction with its top pointing towards the sky (Isaiah 11:9-10).
- C. The Lord has founded the church and laid its foundations (Isaiah 14:32; 1 Corinthians 3:6). It is the scene of His glories where He manifests Himself and His beauty is beheld (Psalm 27:4; 29:2; 96:9).

## II. **The Promise**

- A. Under the Law of Moses, God promised to bless His people if they were faithful (Leviticus 26:4).
  - 1. Just like Jesus's kingdom is spiritual (John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17), God's promises now are spiritual in their nature (Ephesians 1:3, 10).
  - 2. Protection, provision and comfort are included in these blessings (Romans 5:1-5; Philippians 4:6-7), along with redemption and forgiveness (Isaiah 55:3; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). These are the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8).
- B. The promise includes abundance.
  - 1. The fact that God will abundantly bless is established elsewhere in the Old Testament (Hosea 6:1-3; 10:12).
  - 2. These "showers of blessing" are spiritual and God can easily fill our vessels to overflowing (1 Kings 4:29-34; Malachi 3:10).
- C. The blessings will promote a happy influence on all.
  - 1. The church is to spread the savor of grace throughout the whole earth (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21).
  - 2. Because of many brethren's hard work and sacrifice, the Lord's church will be the joy of many generations.

**Conclusion.** Do you dwell in the Lord's holy hill? Our constant desire and prayer should be that there will be showers of blessings in every place where the truth of Christ is preached, and that all who profess the gospel will be filled with the fruits of righteousness.