

v13 ““The greatest wealth that Isaiah can imagine for Israel is that her children could become disciples of (those who are taught by) the Lord. Throughout the book, and indeed, the Bible, this is seen as the essence of a relationship with God. It is not metaphysical union with God that is sought but the learning of his ways and a replication of his character” (Oswalt 1998: 428).

v17 “Although this concept of an inheritance was traditionally connected to receiving the land of Palestine as their possession (Gen 15:7–8; 17:8; 28:4; Deut 4:1,21; Isa 49:8), now the heritage of the nation includes children (54:1), an enlarged tent to the left and right (54:2), promises of no shame (54:4), God’s compassion (54:8), God’s unfailing love and covenant of peace (54:10), a bejeweled city (54:11–12), sons taught by God (54:13), and divine protection (54:14–17a). These possessions are much more valuable than a small piece of real estate in the Middle East because they involve the unending implications of being recipients of God’s compassion and love. But this is not all that God promises his people. The final line adds that “their righteousness” will come from God” (Smith 2009: 492).

“Subtly, but quite unmistakably, Isaiah links them to the greatest Servant of all. As he was a disciple, taught by the Lord (50:4), so are they (13). They have suffered affliction (11) as he did (53:4). And as he will surely be vindicated (50:8), so will they be (17). The ‘servants of the Lord’ follow in the footsteps of the perfect Servant. They share his sufferings, and will also share his glory. They are ‘his offspring’, the fruit of his sacrifice (53:10), and the city of God will be their home for ever” (Webb 1996: 216).

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Why does God make promises like these? How does hope function in the believer’s life?

Why are so many titles for God used in verse 5? What do they teach us about God, both individually and collectively?

Has this passage been fulfilled? When and how will it be fulfilled?

### SOURCES CITED

John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, NICOT, 1998  
Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, New American Commentary, 2009.  
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## ISAIAH 54: THE INHERITANCE OF THE SERVANTS

### STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 49-55

Servant song (#2)	49:1–13
Salvation for Zion	49:14–50:3
Servant song (#3)	50:4–11
Salvation for Zion	51:1–52:12
Servant song (#4)	52:13–53:12
<b>Salvation for Zion</b>	<b>54:1–17</b>
Conclusion	55:1–13 (adapted from Smith 2009: 337)

### OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 54

- I. God’s everlasting love to a forgiven wife (54:1-10)
  - A. Children for a barren woman (Abrahamic Covenant) (54:1-3)
  - B. Redemption for a wayward wife (Mosaic Covenant) (54:4-8)
  - C. Security for a punished woman (Noahic Covenant) (54:9-10)
- II. God’s perfect righteousness for an afflicted city (54:11-17)
  - A. Prosperity for a rebuilt city (54:11-12)
  - B. Righteousness for the city’s sons (54:13-14)
  - C. Peace for the city’s servants (54:15-17)

Summary of passage: You who have no children will have many children (1) and therefore you need to expand your home (2). Your descendants who were once nearly destroyed by the nations will now be so numerous they will take over nations and fill empty cities (3). Your shame will be removed (4) because God will restore you to himself as your husband (5-6) and he will never be separated from you (7-8) because he has promised to never become angry with you again (9-10). He will rebuild the city with the most splendid of jewels (11-12), he will establish the nation in peace (13), and he will rule in righteousness (14). Since he controls all things he can ensure that no enemy will ever prevail over his people (15-16). This is the lasting inheritance of those who are the Lord’s servants.

## NOTES

“The hearers are called to sing for joy, to expand their tents, and to live in confidence. For what reason? Because the childless, rejected wife is going to be restored to the arms of her loving husband, who promises that nothing can prevent him from loving her, and she will have enough children to fill the earth. Here indeed is cause for praise: abundance for emptiness, honor for shame, and eternal love for lonely despair. This is our God” (Oswalt 1998: 415).

“The overall purpose of these words is to provide the people of Zion with assurances about the future so that Zion will be able to respond to God’s offer of love and salvation based on solid reasoning” (Smith 2009: 476).

“If nothing intervenes between 52:12 and 54:1, the shift is unaccountable. But if 52:13–53:12 is understood as an expression of the means by which a restored relationship between God and his people is possible, then the change in atmosphere is entirely understandable” (Oswalt 1998: 413).

“The witnesses in 53:5 are aware that their relationship with God has been fully restored, not by anything they have done, but by what the Servant has done for them: ‘the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed’. So as we come to chapters 54 and 55 the blockage has been removed. The floodgates of divine blessing have been flung open, and peace begins to flow like a river” (Webb 1996: 215).

v1 “It is cruel to ask a barren woman to sing unless you are able to offer her the only thing that will make her happy. And that is the very thing God offers his people. Humanly speaking they are finished, but in the power of God they will influence the world long after mighty Babylon is a pile of sand” (Oswalt 1998: 416).

This rejoicing is not something you can do if you don’t believe in God, don’t submit to him, don’t worship him. Though it seems so easy to rejoice and enjoy the blessings, a hardened heart cannot do this. Just as Jerusalem could not rejoice when her king came to her riding on a donkey because they did not accept the king for who he was, so the people of Israel will not rejoice if they do not accept their reconciliation to God brought about by the Servant.

v2 – compare with Jeremiah 10:20: “My tent is destroyed; all its ropes are snapped. My sons are gone from me and are no more; no one is left now to pitch my tent or to set up my shelter.”

v2 “To broaden or enlarge the tent, and to stretch out more curtains in their dwelling place. This was common practice when a family had more children or when a man added another wife. If a family wanted to expand their living space all the women had to do was to sew some more goatskins together to make the roof larger and then add a curtain or two for privacy” (Smith 2009: 478).

v3 “They will “spread out” far and wide in all directions in fulfillment of God’s ancient promise to the patriarchs in Gen 28:14. God told Jacob that his seed would spread out to the east, north, and south. The phrase “to the right and to the left” in 54:3 is a similar expression that means that the children (lit. “seed”) of Israel will live in the greatly expanded city of Zion, which will explode “in all directions.” There will be so many children that they will end up taking possession of property in other nations” (Smith 2009: 479).

v5 “God will not be satisfied with ruling over a few thousand people, or just one city or nation; he is the “Lord over all the earth” (Josh 3:11), the “King of all the earth” (Ps 47:8), for all the earth is his (Exod 19:5). One day all the earth will see his glory (6:3; 40:5), and one day every knee will bow before him (45:6,22–25; 49:26) and come to Zion to worship him (2:1–5)” (Smith 2009: 481–82).

v8 “Restoration to the land is really not the principal issue—restoration to the loving glance of God is. Restoration to the land is nothing without restoration to the presence of God” (Oswalt 1998: 421–22).

vv11–17 “This new paragraph is a continuation of a proclamation of salvation that describes eschatological events (not when the people return from exile). It explains the glories of the New Jerusalem in terms of its natural beauty, its internal spiritual dynamics, and its protection from all those who might attack it” (Smith 2009: 487).

v11 “Hope is often dismissed as something that is possible only by denying hard facts. If that is sometimes true, it is certainly not the case here. It is precisely despairing, drifting, resourceless Israel to which these incredible promises are addressed” (Oswalt 1998: 426).