

sees the terrible fate which is ahead for the nation. From Isaiah 40 on, it is this portion of the people which is primarily in mind. Their punishment is not so much a matter of penalty as one of purification and cleansing in order to make them fit to carry on the work that God desires them to do. Zion here represents the godly portion of Israel at that time, and may be used as a figure to represent the true people of God at any time.

Occasionally in the New Testament we find a contrast between the Jerusalem that now is and the Jerusalem that is above. The one represents the great mass of people who profess the name of God, and the other stands for those who are really His own. Thus in Galatians 4:26 we read: "For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." There we have a contrast between two Jerusalems, each of which represents an attitude towards God's work. Again in Hebrews 12:22, we read: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." In the New Testament, Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, represents the true people of God in all ages regardless of their racial background.

As evidence of His wonderful love, God condescends to answer Zion's objection and to relieve her from her despair.

### **God's Answer**

The Lord's answer to Zion's complaint is given in three sections. The first, which runs from verse 15 to verse 23, is the longest. It begins with the figure of a woman's relation to her child: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." God declares His relationship to His people. He has begotten them Himself and He bears a relation to them even closer than that of a mother to her own child.

Verse 16 continues the assurance of God's permanent relation to His people. He has engraved them upon the palms of His hands. Their protection is ever before Him.