

## Isaiah 57-66

### Isaiah 57 No Peace to the Wicked but Restoration for the Repentant

A terrible portrayal is given here of the idolatries and impurities into which the Chosen People had fallen. They refused to remember God and He gave them over to a reprobate mind; that is, He ceased to restrain them.

But amid the degenerate nation, there was a handful of the elect remnant. Amid the destruction that the guilty would face, they that trusted in Him would not be overlooked (Isa 57:13-14).

*With what comfort the chapter closes! We may have been covetous and adulterous, and have deserved wrath and God's fury, but God will not always reprimand us. When we return to Him, He will revive our heart and "restore comfort" to us. He will heal the wounded and bring them near through the blood of Christ. Do you have peace, the peace Jesus said He leaves with us?*

### Isaiah 58 Fasting that God Has Chosen

The Lord condemned the people's hypocritical claims of loyalty and their empty expressions of repentance. Their unjust and violent deeds made their fasts unacceptable. The Lord demanded righteous living, not meaningless ritual. They were to free the oppressed, feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, and clothe the naked. In addition to caring for the needs of others, they also were to demonstrate true devotion to God by honoring His Sabbath Day. Then they would experience the Lord's protective presence, enjoy His blessings, and witness the rebuilding of the land.

*Fasters included Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel, Anna, Paul, Jesus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards. Fasting is about honoring and pleasing God, abasing ourselves, not hanging our head down wearing sackcloth and ashes, but centering ourselves on God. Have you ever fasted for the right reason?*

### Isaiah 59 God's Intervention and the Coming of the Redeemer

The Lord was able and willing to restore His people, but their persistence in sin had separated them from Him. He could not tolerate their violence, deceit, and injustice. Their evil thoughts produced destructive actions. In contrast to the justice and peace demanded by the Lord, their lifestyle was characterized by bloodshed.

Identifying with and representing the nation, the prophet acknowledged the truth of the preceding accusation. He grieved that justice and truth had disappeared, preventing divine deliverance from becoming a reality. He confessed the nation's many sins and admitted that they had rebelled against and rejected the Lord.

In response to the prophet's confession on behalf of the nation, a message of salvation now appears. The Lord would judge His enemies and return to Jerusalem to rule over His repentant people. He would establish a new covenant with them, enabling them by His Spirit to obey His commandments.

*The same doctrines which Jesus preached, all of the faithful preach; and Christians, who are all born of God, believe; and these doctrines will remain through all generations forever.*

### Isaiah 60 God is Glorified in the Remnant

The Lord's glorious return would begin a bright new era for Jerusalem. The city's exiled population would return, and nations would bring their wealth as a tribute to the Lord. Signs of the Lord's blessing

would be everywhere. Foreigners would rebuild the city's walls. Its gates would remain open to accommodate the steady stream of visitors bringing tribute. The trees of Lebanon would be used as building materials for the Lord's temple. Those who formerly oppressed the city would acknowledge its special status. God's glorious presence would assure continual peace and justice. In fulfillment of His promise to Abraham, His people would possess the promised land forever and experience extraordinary population growth.

*What a day that will be for Israel after the long centuries of suffering and their days of mourning! GOD will never give up this people.*

### **Isaiah 61 Jesus Introduces Future Blessings**

Chapter 61 begins with the prophet relating his commission to proclaim good news to the city's grieving exiles. The Lord had officially decreed a year of release for His captive people. They would rebuild the cities of the land and serve the Lord as a nation of priests. Foreigners would serve them and bring them their wealth. The Lord would take away His people's shame and give them a double portion of His blessings. The nations would recognize Israel's special relationship to the Lord. The recipient of God's blessings rejoiced in His salvation.

*Jesus began his public ministry by quoting verses from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue. Although Israel as a nation refused to accept the challenge and take on the identity the prophet gave them, God did not fail His people. Jesus came, became the new Messenger, and brought new hope of salvation to the world.*

### **Isaiah 62 Jerusalem is Restored**

The intercession at the beginning of the chapter is that of Christ. He will not rest until He has accomplished His purpose in His earthly people and Zion. When it is accomplished, Gentiles and kings will witness it. Zion then shall be called by a new name. The forsaken one will no longer be forsaken; the desolation of the land will end. She shall be called Hephzibah (my delight in her); the land will be Beulah (married). All points to the glorious consummation of the kingdom and other watchmen intercede and give Him no rest till He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

*Israel is pouting over God's silence and their poverty back in Jerusalem. But God says to quit complaining and get ready for God to fulfill His promise.*

### **Isaiah 63 The Executor of the Day of Vengeance**

The prophet describes a Warrior returning from the conflict. While that conflict is described, it is from the standpoint of its completion. One is seen returning with crimson garments, marching in the greatness of His strength. In answer to the prophet's inquiry as to who this is, the Warrior declares, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." This answer reveals the method and purpose. Again, the prophet asks for an explanation, and then the conflict is described. It has been one of vengeance, in which all opposing forces have been swept away to establish righteousness and bring salvation.

The prophet's sense of the absolute justice of the judgment described is shown in that he immediately breaks forth into praise of the loving-kindnesses of the Lord. In language full of beauty, he describes Jehovah's faithfulness to His people. His description looks back to the days in which, despite their rebellion and their grieving of His Holy Spirit, through which He was necessarily made their enemy, He nevertheless carried them, and remembered them, and delivered them.

*They had no worship to offer the Lord, but they called on Him to act when they were in trouble. It was as though God went from their Redeemer to their enemy. In Isa 63:16 is a seldom-used word in the Old Testament: Father.*

## **Isaiah 64 The Great Intercessory Prayer**

This chapter is a prayer that combines weeping over the people's current situation, confession of sin, statements of confidence, and petitions for God's deliverance. Confident that God remained their Father and Redeemer, the prophet asked that God might respond compassionately to their plight. He grieved that the Lord had given them over to the hardness of their hearts and that the enemies of God had destroyed His temple. He asked that the Lord might break through the heavens and judge the nations, demonstrating once more His ability to deliver those who trusted Him. He acknowledged their punishment was well-deserved, for they had been totally contaminated by sin. Yet, the prophet, confident that their relationship with God was not completely severed, begged Him to relent from His anger. Surely the ruined land and temple were proof that their punishment was enough.

*God always transforms His people when they confess their sin. Israel wanted God on its side but wanted to live like the world. God taught them a lesson by being silent, doing nothing for them. Israel pouted, then listened to God. They found God ready to save them. So, stop pouting and ask for a renewed relationship. Do you sense God's silence today? Do you think God will answer your prayer?*

## **Isaiah 65 God's Answer: Separation of the Righteous and the Wicked**

Chapter 65 contrasts the respective destinies of the righteous and the wicked. Despite the Lord's constant attempts to get Israel's attention, many rejected Him and embraced pagan religious practices. Such stubbornness demanded harsh punishment. However, the Lord would exercise discrimination in judgment. He would preserve the righteous and give them the promised land as a reward. A new world was coming, in which purified Jerusalem would be the focal point. The troubles of the past would be forgotten, and God's blessings would abound. Life spans would dramatically increase; the people would enjoy the fruits of their labor; God would respond immediately to their prayers; all dangers would be eliminated, and peace would prevail.

*God's answer is not "Yes, I love you!" but "Where have you been all this time?" If God's people will only hurry up and pray, then paradise would be restored. Get rid of your gripes and turn to the Lord in earnest prayer.*

## **Isaiah 66**

Chapter 66 begins by contrasting the character of the righteous and the wicked. The righteous were humble, repentant, and showed respect for God's commandments. The wicked were violent, idolatrous, self-willed, spiritually unresponsive, and hostile to the righteous.

A day of retribution was coming, in which the wicked would be purged and the righteous vindicated. The Lord's fiery judgment would destroy the wicked along with their pagan practices. The righteous would take possession of glorified and renewed Jerusalem, where peace and prosperity would abound. The Gentiles would come to Jerusalem regularly to worship the Lord. In the background, the smoldering, decaying carcasses of the wicked would serve as a constant reminder of the consequences of rebellion against the Great King.

The Book of Isaiah begins with the Lord accusing His people of rebellion (compare 1:2). It ends with a hideous but sobering description of the total and final destruction of the rebellious.

## **Theological and Ethical Significance of Isaiah**

For Isaiah God was "the Holy One of Israel" and "the Creator of the ends of the earth." Such a God demanded moral purity and justice from His people and all nations. God's people, like other nations, failed to meet His standards of behavior. The Holy One was thus just in punishing their sin by sending them into exile. God, however, desired to play the part of Savior, Redeemer, and Father to those who would turn to Him in repentance. Isaiah called Israel to hope in God, the Creator who brought order from chaos and the Redeemer who rescued Israel from Egyptian captivity. Such a God would surely again redeem his people in leading them home to a restored Jerusalem.

Isaiah challenges Christians to hope in God, who is not through with creation. Old Testament Israel only partially realized God's salvation and peace. God, who acted to save Christians in the past through the Suffering Servant Jesus, will act again to bring history to His desired end of a new heaven and a new earth.