

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #96

Isaiah 66:1-24

The big theme of the book of Isaiah is that God can save and can deliver and can comfort Israel and any who will turn to Him. Salvation and deliverance are found only in Him. However, as we have journeyed through this book we have discovered that God can and will also make life miserable for those who do not. There is no peace, no rest, no joy, and no blessing for those who refuse to turn to the Lord. That also is a theme we have seen over and over again

We now come to the final chapter of this incredible prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah is one of the great prophetic books of the Bible, and it is one of the most quoted books of the N.T. writers, which means those apostles carefully studied it. Many of the prophecies developed in these chapters are yet to be fulfilled.

There are many incredible things in store for Israel and for all of God's people in regard to God's future. As Isaiah brings his prophecy to a conclusion, there is one thing Isaiah wants God's people to know:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE KNOWING THAT HE WILL FULFILL ALL OF HIS PROPHECIES PERTAINING TO ISRAEL, AND HE WILL ACTUALLY CHANGE HER WORLD STATUS IN ONE DAY.

The day that Israel's status will be changed is the day Jesus Christ returns to Israel. In one day Jesus Christ will return to this earth, and the moment He does, things for Israel and for all her enemies will change drastically. Actually, in this chapter there are references to things in the Tribulation, God's final judgments against the nations, and His final restoration of Israel. There are seven final prophetic facts Isaiah presents:

PROPHETIC FACT #1 – God will look to one who is humble and contrite and who trembles at His Word. **66:1-2**

Now we must keep in our minds that Isaiah predicted that the Babylonians would take Judah and Jerusalem captive in a little over 100 years (700 B.C. - 586 B.C. equals 114 years). When she would finally get out of captivity, one of the first things on her agenda would be go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. **Before the Temple worship would actually mean something, these people needed to give God their hearts.** This was precisely the problem that took them out of the land in the first place.

God begins by making the point that because of His majesty there is no one who can build a house for Him. The fact is, the heaven is His throne and the earth is His footstool. He is the creator of all things (**verses 1-2**). As G. Campbell Morgan said, God is giving His last message against the formalist denouncing their false worship (*The Prophecies of Isaiah*, Vol. 2, pp. 223-224).

God is basically saying to Israel and to us as well, what in the world do you think you could build that would please Me when you do not listen to Me or My Word? Do you think I care about your material things? Do you think your religious building is going to get you into a proper relationship with Me? God says - the heaven is My throne, the earth is My footstool and frankly I don't need your religious buildings.

People can build magnificent churches and religious buildings that mean zero to God. He owns the heavens and the earth. **God is not interested in buildings; He is interested in hearts. In fact, Stephen quoted this very text and makes this very point at his death (Acts 7:49-51).**

The reason why Isaiah brings this up is because Israel wanted to worship God in a nice building externally, but did not have hearts that were really interested in knowing God or His Word. **Isaiah reveals that what is of real value to God is not a worship building, but a humble, contrite spirit and heart that trembles at His Word.**

Israel proves that it is possible to be very religious and come to church services regularly and not be right with God in one's heart. One can come to church every time the door is open and not have the reality of a right relationship with God. A person could sit in church and be so out of fellowship with God that it makes God sick. God wants people worshipping Him in spirit and truth.

God finds His great value in people who humbly fear Him and His Word. This entire book of Isaiah has communicated the need for people to turn to the Lord and to the Word of God. The whole book is a treatise that is trying to get Israel to realize that salvation is in the Lord. God says those who want a close relationship with Me do not get it simply by building Me a house, but by a humble and contrite spirit that "trembles at My Word."

The Hebrew word "tremble" (chared) (**66:2, 5**) is one that means to so reverence the Word of God that one has a trembling fear of it (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 303). How many people do you know who actually "tremble" at the Word of God? You will be hard pressed to find many churches and many who go to church who actually reverence the Word of God. Truth is we can't even get many people to even come hear the Word of God two times on Sunday because they have other interests. Wouldn't it be something if every one in this church had such a reverence for the Word of God that they wanted to be there every time it was taught? Wouldn't it be something if when it convicted them they literally trembled?

Adam Clarke was a Hebrew scholar and theologian in England in the late 1700s. He grew up in a Christian home and his mother had spent a lot of time reading him the Bible, and one of the texts she had read to him was out of Proverbs 30:17 which says, "The eye that mocks a father, and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it." One day he was outside playing and he knew he had been disobedient to his mother and he looked up and saw a raven. He started to cry and put his hands over his eyes and ran into the house to keep the raven from plucking out his eyes. There is an amazing illustration of one who trembled at the Word of God and it is no wonder he was so greatly used by God.

People who will be honored by God are those who took His Word seriously.

PROPHETIC FACT #2 – God will judge all religious hypocrites who did not tremble at His Word. **66:3-6**

When you first read what the people were doing in **verse 3**, it looks impressive. They are sacrificing their oxen and lambs; they are bringing their offerings and burning their incense. From all external appearances these were very religious people who looked like they were right with God. But behind the scenes of all of this external façade was the reality that they “have chosen their own ways” and they delighted “in their abominations.”

The religious things most people were doing, such as bringing their sacrifices and offerings, were nothing more than external ritual. Their hearts were not right with God. They worshipped God their own way, which was an external way rather than an internal way, a soul right with God (**verse 3**).

It is interesting that God compares the sacrifices of the people to simply being an execution of an animal. God did not view their sacrifices as having any significance. They brought their lamb sacrifices to the Temple and God viewed them as being like breaking the neck of a dog. One who rejects Jesus Christ may have all kinds of religious rituals that God views as swine’s blood. All that those animal sacrifices did from God’s perspective was kill an animal.

God says that He would send harsh judgment against His own people, and those who did not tremble at His Word would be shamed. In fact, He says that because they would not listen to His Word, He will “choose their punishments” and “bring on them what they dread” (**verse 4**). The thing Israel dreads is the rise of another Hitler. One worse than Hitler will surface - the Antichrist.

This text should cause every one of us to ask ourselves this question - What is the main reason I go to church? Is it to carefully hear and learn God’s precious Word or is it just a habit of ritualistic religion?

PROPHETIC FACT #3 – God will give birth to the nation Israel on one day. **66:7-9**

It is predicted here that God will give sudden rise and complete restoration to Israel. It is predicted that this will occur on one day.

We know from Revelation that the boy that Israel gave birth to is none other than Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:5-6). This is the boy that will one day “rule all the nations.” It was a long pregnancy for Israel until she finally gave birth to Jesus Christ, and it has now been a long time since she has seen Him since He ascended back into heaven. But there is a day predicted in which Jesus Christ will return. Every eye will see Him and when that happens what a day it will be for Israel.

Israel’s return to her land is compared to the pregnancy of a woman who is going to deliver a baby. Israel will eventually return as a nation to her own land in such a way that it will be like a woman who has a baby. For awhile the baby is not in existence and then after the labor it is here. One moment of time that baby is born and all the hard labor is done.

God says this is what I will do for Israel. Israel has “travailed” for a long time looking for her Messiah and longing for her land. There is coming one day when this will happen. Jesus Christ will return to Israel and she will have the deed to all of her Promised Land. The day Christ returns Israel’s status will instantly change. Isaiah predicts that is exactly what God will do.

PROPHETIC FACT #4 – God will bless His people in Jerusalem. **66:10-14**

The opening words of **verse 10** give us an amazing prediction because certainly the attitude of the world is not “Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her.” But it is predicted that one day this will be the attitude of the whole world.

Here is a very tender picture of Israel in her land and in her key city Jerusalem, and God is comforting her like a mother comforts her baby. Israel will be God’s delight and they will enjoy Jerusalem as never before. It will be like a plush, peaceful garden with overflowing streams and great tranquility.

PROPHETIC FACT #5 – God will pour out His wrath on the nations. **66:15-19**

G. Campbell Morgan said God’s last message to the world is pending ferocious judgment. The language of **verses 15-17** is scary. The noun “fire” is used three times in **verses 15-16** along with words like anger, fury, judgment, slain, and come to an end. This language is not describing a gentle Jesus Christ, but a ferocious Jesus Christ coming back to pour out God’s wrath on God-mocking, Israel-hating nations.

God intends to pour out His wrath on all of His enemies and on all of His people’s enemies. Carefully observe that things will be so bad during the final days of the Tribulation that people will be eating mice (**verse 17**).

Now **verses 18-19** give us some amazing information about the finale of the Tribulation. According to **verse 18**, God will gather the nations against Jerusalem in the final days of the Tribulation. We get great details about this in the final chapter of Zechariah (chapter 14). When the nations are gathered, God will set a “sign” among them. This sign will be the “sign of the Son of man” (Matthew 24:30). This sign will be none other than Jesus Christ standing on the Mount of Olives. When some of the Gentile people see this sign, they will flee the area. Apparently some of the non-Jewish people will come to their senses and realize we have no chance of defeating Jesus Christ in Israel and they will run. Some will flee to Spain (Tarshish), some to Africa (Put, Lud), Russia (Rosh, Tubul), and some to Greece (Javan). They will flee to these areas and declare the glory of Jesus Christ.

What exactly will these people be declaring? They will be declaring the Kingdom message that Jesus Christ has returned to Israel and is going to rule the world from Jerusalem and Israel is His glorious nation.

Keep in mind that many of these Gentile witnesses will have actually seen Jesus Christ literally destroy the nations who came against Israel.

PROPHETIC FACT #6 – God will cause all Israeli children to come home. **66:20**

These people will not only declare the glory of Jesus Christ, but they will see to it that all Jews get to go home. Believing Gentiles will go to various Gentile areas and gather believing Jews and help them get to Jerusalem.

It has been awhile since we have been through the book of Matthew, but we may recall that when Jesus gave His Olivet discourse (Matthew 24-25), He predicted that when Jesus Christ returns one of the first things He will do is gather up His elect and bring them to Jerusalem (Matthew 24:29-31). There will be many Jews scattered all over the world, and one of the things that some of the Gentiles are going to do is see to it that they get back to Israel.

Notice that travel means will be very primitive. During the Tribulation, much of the world will be completely destroyed by God. People will be traveling by very primitive means and that point is certainly brought out here.

PROPHETIC FACT #7 – God will create a priesthood that will affect the whole world.
66:21-24

We may recall that Isaiah predicted in Isaiah 61:6 that one day Israel will be viewed as the priestly nation of God. One day Israel will be spoken of as the ministers of God.

God will one day see to it that His nation Israel is viewed as the most sacred nation on the face of this earth.

Jerusalem will be the headquarters of worship and Israel will be His priests who lead the worship. It will be a perpetual worship; from new moon to new moon, from Sabbath to Sabbath “all” mankind will come and bow down before Jesus Christ.

The last verse of Isaiah ends on a note of judgment for those not right with God. Why is that? Because God wants to make it very clear that He will not save everyone and He will leave Himself a witness to this effect.

In this book of Isaiah, God offers all Jewish and non-Jewish sinners His grace and His salvation. All of us like sheep have gone astray and turned to our own sinful way. But God gave His Son to us and His Son came and was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. However, if one rejects this grace salvation, we may be certain that there is an eternal place of fire where God-mockers will burn. The horrors of the Lake of Fire are very real for one who rejects God’s salvation.

Throughout all eternity the wicked will burn, and there will be no peace, no rest, and no contentment.

One of the key messages of this book of Isaiah is “seek the Lord while He may be found” (Isaiah 55:6). If you will believe totally and completely in Jesus Christ to save you from your sins, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).