

A Trek Through Isaiah 76 - 56:1-12

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For this week:

- The Sabbath people 1 56:1-8
- The divided people (part 1): failure of the leaders 56:9-12

Context

<u>The Ideal and the Actual 56:1 - 59:13</u>
The waiting people 56:1-8
The divided people 56:9 - 57:21
Ineffective religion 58:1-14
The guilty people 59:1-13

- In the book of the Conqueror (56 - 66): How will God's people fulfill their promise?
- In this book, Isaiah speaks of three things
 - The contrast between the ideal community and the actual community
 - God's glorious promises for the faithful.
 - A Conqueror: the third messianic figure who accomplishes God's purpose and fulfills His promises.
- This section (56 - 59) has four parts which contrast the ideal (the people of God as they are intended to be) with the actual (how they actually are).
- We will cover part 1 and part of part 2

The waiting people 56:1-8

- V1-2 Expectant **waiting**; resulting **blessing**

1 Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed. 2 Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

- Keep justice, and do righteousness.
 - Keep justice. Take possession of God's law.
 - Do righteousness. Live in accordance with God's law.
 - As Is 51:1 Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord:
 - Not salvation by works but showing salvation by works.
 - As 1 Jn 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.
- for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed.
 - Soon. At Jesus in Mk 1:15 The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
 - My salvation. The freedom from sin won by the Servant.
 - My righteousness. God's righteous purpose.
 - Our living hope as 1 Pet 1:3 According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast,
 - Biblical ethics: Right living now based on future hope, bringing blessing.
 - Does this...holds it fast. As v1.
- who keeps the Sabbath
 - Reordering his life according to his faith. Represents the first part of the Ten Commandments which regulate the relationship between man and God.
 - Entering into God's rest. As Ex 23:12 Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.
- and keeps his hand from doing any evil.
 - Represents the second part of the Ten Commandments which regulate the relationships among men.

- V3-8 All-embracing **inclusiveness**

3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” 4 For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5 I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6 “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” 8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”

- Foreigners...eunuchs.
 - Two examples of universal inclusiveness.
- who has joined himself to the Lord.
 - OT law was inclusive: Ex 12:48 If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.
 - But it was necessary for the outsider to voluntarily join himself to the LORD.
 - For the eunuchs
 - keep my Sabbaths,
 - choose the things that please me
 - hold fast my covenant
 - For the foreigners
 - join themselves to the Lord
 - to minister to him,
 - to love the name of the Lord,
 - to be his servants,
 - everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it.
 - (Who) holds fast my covenant
 - As Ruth in Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”
 - Contrast Ezra 4:1-3 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, 2 they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers’ houses and said to them, “Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here.” 3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers’ houses in Israel said to them, “You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.”
 - They came not to join but as adversaries.

- Promised rewards tailored to each person
 - For the eunuch who could not have a family
 - in my house and within my walls.
 - A place in God's family
 - Access to God's presence
 - a monument and a name better than sons and daughters;
 - Better than what they had lost.
 - an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.
 - Eternal security.
 - For the foreigner from another nation
 - I will bring to my holy mountain,
 - Brought near
 - (I will) make them joyful in my house of prayer;
 - Rejoicing in a speaking relationship with God
 - their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;
 - Access to the ordinances that bring atonement.
- I will gather yet others to him
 - Speaking of the Conqueror
 - Note the order: (1) Israel (2) the nations
 - As spoken to the Servant in Is 49:6 "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
 - As spoken by Jesus in Jn 10:16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

The divided people 56:9 - 57:21

- Structure
 - Down from the heights of vision. Back to the realities of the present world.
 - Failure of the leaders 56:9-12
 - Leaders who do not come close to the ideal of the promised Davidic monarchy.
 - The prostitute's brood and the LORD's household 57:1-21
 - Conflict between those who have apostatized to the cults and those who are faithful to the LORD.
 - Those who are faithful know the Lord's presence and guidance, and are destined for peace.
 - Those who fall away are abandoned to their idols and know no peace.

- Failure of the leaders 56:9-12

9 All you beasts of the field, come to devour— all you beasts in the forest. 10 His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. 11 The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. 12 “Come,” they say, “let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.”

- Picture of a flock in the care of shepherds and watchdogs who are worthless.
- A feast with unexpected guests
 - Israel's leaders presently devouring (v11-12)
 - Israel's enemies called to devour (v9)
 - Come...come.
 - Inclusio v9, 12
 - Israel's self-indulgent rulers feast; they are unaware that others have been invited.
- V9 The beasts
 - Beasts of the field...beasts in the forest. Israel's enemies, either external or internal.

- V10-12 The watchmen and shepherds
 - Failing in both aspects of leadership
 - Watchmen guarding from danger
 - Shepherds caring for present needs
 - Both civil and religious leaders are in view.
 - V10 all...all. 2x for emphasis.
 - Unable: blind, without knowledge, silent, cannot bark.
 - Unwilling: dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber
 - Dreaming: concerned with their own visions
 - Insatiable: mighty appetite, never have enough
 - Note how the incompetent watchdogs of v10 become the insatiable street dogs of v11.
 - 2 Ki 9:33-35 describes street dogs devouring the body of Jezebel. Only the skull, feet, palms of her hands remained.
 - Selfish: all turned to their own way, each to his own gain
 - Complacent: tomorrow will be like this day
 - Accountable to no one
 - V12 may be a drinking song of the day.
 - Ezekiel condemns the leaders of Israel in Ez 34:8 As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep...
 - Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-30 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Discussion

We will break into three groups for discussion. The questions are

1. **Soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed 56:1-2**
 - a. **The present reality**
 - b. **The coming ideal**
 - c. **1 Pet 1:3 "...born again to a living hope..."**
2. **All-embracing inclusiveness 56:3-8**
 - a. **The eunuch who has no future**
 - b. **The foreigner who is different**
 - c. **All gathered**
3. **Failure of the leaders 56:9-12**
 - a. **Unable, unwilling, insatiable, selfish, complacent**

Remember to worship the Lord: (1) See (2) Know (3) Respond

For next week:

- The divided people (part 2): the prostitute's brood and the Lord's household 57:1-21

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