

FINAL CHAPTER OF ISAIAH

TEXT: ISAIAH 66

Introduction:

1. The Bible commentator Merrill Unger described the final chapter of Isaiah as a “panoramic perspective” and a “synoptic finale of Isaiah’s entire prophecy.”
2. In his *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Dr. Unger says Isaiah 66 “restates the leading prophetic themes of the book that focus on Israel’s ultimate destiny. The LORD speaks to the apostate mass of Israel, restored to their homeland in unbelief in the last days. They will erect a temple in Jerusalem and resume its ancient worship.”
3. HA Ironside says Isaiah 66 “gathers together the threads of God’s ways of holiness and grace” (*Isaiah*).

I. GOD REJECTS APOSTATE ISRAEL’S WORSHIP

1. Today we are seeing the return of the Jews to their ancient land, but they are returning in unbelief. They are under the delusion that they can reject the Lord Jesus Christ, and continue to worship God according to their own man-made traditions and rituals – “Yea, they have chosen their own ways” (66:3).
2. God rejects their unbelief, their arrogance, their hypocrisy, and their abominable religious ritualism (cf. 66:3, 4).
3. I read an article at prayer meeting this past Wednesday evening about the Jews’ attempt to restore the temple worship in Jerusalem. Though the temple was destroyed nearly 2,000 years ago, a new workshop has opened in Jerusalem, in which robes will be manufactured for practicing priests.
4. According to a report in *The Jerusalem Post*, a number of Kohanim, (Jews in the Cohen family line who trace their ancestry back to Aaron, the first High Priest) have already had measurements taken for their vestments. One of these supposed “priests” is the chief rabbi of Efrat Shlomo Riskin.
5. For the new garments, special flaxen thread is being imported from India, and worms from which just the right color crimson dye is obtained are being brought in from Istanbul.
6. The new workshop was inaugurated by the Temple Institute, which is situated in Jerusalem’s old City, very close to the Temple Mount, the site of the first and second temples, and the place where the Jews hope to erect a new third temple.

7. The Jews claim this temple will be built to welcome the Messiah. In reality, it will be built for the antichrist (cf. John 5:43; Daniel 9:27; Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2:3-12; Rev. 11:1, 2; 13:4).
8. The LORD tells apostate Israel He does not want them to build Him a temple. It is an insult to our holy God for Christ-denying apostates to build a temple in His name.
9. The LORD says, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isa. 66:1).
10. When King Solomon dedicated the first temple, he prayed, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (I Kings 8:27).
11. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:34, 35, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King."
12. Furthermore, the LORD told these apostate Israelites that He only looks favorably on "him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at (God's) word" (Isa. 66:2, 5).
13. Here the LORD is referring specifically to the repentant remnant that will receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah 12:10 says, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."
14. Zechariah 13:1 says, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."
15. That Scripture inspired William Cowper to write, "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins; And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."
16. The apostle Paul, quoting Isaiah, says in Romans 11:26, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."
17. God so detests the hypocritical worship of Christ-denying Israel that He says in Isaiah 66:3, "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man." In other words, the insincere, unregenerate worshiper is as bad as a murderer!
18. "He that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck" (66:3). Dogs were considered dirty, unclean animals in Israel. Our Lord said in Matthew 7:6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs."
19. "He that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood" (66:3). Swine were also considered unclean. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine..." (Matt. 7:6).

20. "He that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol" (66:3). An unregenerate Christ-rejecter is nothing but an idolater in the eyes of God.
21. God hates their presumptuous false worship. "Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations" (66:3b).
22. "Abomination" (66:3b) is a strong word, used in the Bible to describe sins like homosexuality, idolatry, and witchcraft.
23. God says in Isaiah 66:4, "I also will choose their delusions..." This is similar to II Thess. 2:11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."
24. God will give them up (66:4; cf. 65:12). Proverbs 1:24-28 says, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."
25. Because of their arrogance and stubbornness and hypocrisy and unbelief and disobedience, God will judge them severely during the coming Tribulation (Isa. 66:4, 17).
26. Isaiah 66:5 refers to the faithful remnant of godly Jews who are waiting for the second coming of Christ. Isaiah 66:6 refers to the second coming of Christ – "a voice from the temple."
27. Malachi 3:1 says, "and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple."
28. The apostate Jews will persecute the true believers. "Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (66:5).
29. Our Lord said in John 16:2 and 3, "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me."

II. ISRAEL WILL BE REBORN AS A NATION

1. The Great Tribulation is described in the Bible as a time of "travail" (66:7). "Before she travailed, before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child" (66:7).
2. This is contrary to the natural order, and so the question is asked, "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?" (66:8a).
3. The "man child" refers to the birth of Christ (cf. Rev. 12:1-5).

4. The “woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” is Israel (not Mary as the RCC teaches – cf. Genesis 37:9, 10).
5. While the “man child” is Christ, the “nation” (66:8) is Israel. Israel will be reborn in a day (66:8). This is not referring to the birth of the modern state of Israel on May 14, 1948.
6. On that day, the state of Israel, with the help of the UN, declared its independence.
7. This declaration was immediately followed by a war with the surrounding Arab states, which refused to accept any plan for a new modern state of Israel.
8. And they have been fighting ever since. And they will continue to fight right up to the Battle of Armageddon.
9. There will be no peace without the Prince of Peace.
10. But Isaiah is not referring to May 14, 1948. Isaiah is referring to the second coming of Christ, when He will establish His throne in Jerusalem (Isa. 66:7-14).
11. There are two aspects of the second coming of Christ: blessings for God’s people, and judgment for God’s enemies (66:15, 16).
12. Second Thessalonians 1:7-9 says, “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”
13. When Christ returns to set up His throne in Jerusalem, the Gentile nations will be as kind to Israel as a mother to her baby (66:10-13).
14. God will “come with fire” upon Israel’s enemies, who are also God’s enemies (66:14b-16).
15. Those apostate Jews who engage in lewdness and idolatry and who eat swine’s flesh will also be judged. They shall be “consumed together” (66:17b) when Christ returns.
16. God “will gather all nations and tongues” at the battle of Armageddon (66:18). Our Lord referred to this judgment upon the nations in Matthew 25:32. He said, “And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth His sheep from the goats.”
17. Isaiah 66:19 refers to the restoration of Israel, one of the great themes of the book of Isaiah (cf. 5:26; 11:12; 62:10).

18. Regenerate Jews will carry the Gospel to the nations during the tribulation period, leading up to the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom (66:19-23).
19. Revelation 7 describes 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel. Rev. 14:4 says these evangelists will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."
20. Certainly these 144,000 soulwinning Jews are not "Jehovah's Witnesses" (a false religious cult).
21. The LORD will "set a sign" among the Gentiles (66:19a), in order to bring His people back to the land of Israel. What this "sign" will be is not disclosed, but it appears to be some sort of supernatural intervention.
22. In addition to bringing His people back from their dispersion, the LORD will send many of them out all over the world as missionaries (cf. Rev. 7 & 14).
23. "Tarshish" (66:19) is to the west and refers to Spain and Italy; "Pul and Lud" are in the south and refer to Africa; "Tubal and Javan" are in the north and refer to Russia (cf. Ezekiel 38) and Greece; and "the isles afar off" could refer to the far-off coastlands of Asia and other continents such as North America and South America.
24. Isaiah 66:20 describes how the Gentiles will bring the Jews "out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots..." Various means of transportation will be used, and it is possible that "chariots" could refer to cars, buses, and trucks.
25. You may recall in our study of Isaiah 60:8 that I mentioned this prophecy could be a reference to airplanes. I quoted a few notable Bible teachers.
26. J Vernon McGee says that the "Jews who have come from farther East than Israel thought this prophecy was being fulfilled as they were brought by American airplanes to the land of Israel." (*Thru the Bible*).
27. Harry Bultema wrote, "There can be no doubt that this is a reference to aircraft, which at that time will probably be the means of transportation *par excellence*."
28. WE Vine says Isaiah 60:8 "can well be realized in view of the enormous development of passenger aviation in our times. The transference of the scattered Jews to their own territory could be accomplished in the course of a few days by this means" (*Isaiah*).

III. GOD WILL JUDGE THE WICKED (66:24).

1. It is interesting that the very last verse in Isaiah's prophecy deals with God's judgment upon the wicked (66:24).

2. "They" (66:24a) refers to those who travel to Jerusalem to worship God (66:23). As they pass on their way, they will "look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed" against God.
3. This refers to the piles of dead bodies left from the battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev. 19:17-21).
4. Our Lord referred to this horrible scene in Mark 9:43, when He said, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
5. This frightening illustration is derived from bodies left unburied in the valley of Hinnom (*Gehenna* in the Greek), outside of the city of Jerusalem. It was a garbage dump.
6. There were fires always burning, and the smoke and the terrible smell was a constant reminder of the horrors of hell (cf. Isa. 30:33; Scofield margin).
7. "So those who believe God's Word and have the mind of Christ not only believe in eternal hell but consider it to be just as necessary and as indispensable as heaven to God's character and ways" (Merrill Unger).

CONCLUSION:

1. In his message to the Jewish leaders in Acts 7, Stephen quoted Isaiah 66:1 and 2 (Acts 7:48-50).
2. After quoting Isaiah 66:1 and 2, Stephen said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).
3. The religious Jews reacted angrily and they killed Stephen. This is why the book of Isaiah ends with such a severe warning (66:24).
4. False religion is responsible for leading billions of lost souls to hell. And religious hypocrites have always hated, persecuted, and even murdered true believers (cf. Matt. 23:29-39).
5. Revelation 17:6 says the harlot church of Rome is "drunken with the blood of the saints."
6. Revelation 18:24 says, "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."
7. When we read these Scriptures, we are reminded of all the godly believers who were killed by the RCC during the terrible Inquisition.
8. Thank God, the Lord will soon return to judge all of these religious hypocrites (66:15).
9. How soon no one can know for sure. Israel must first have her birth pangs – her "travail," referred to in Isaiah 66:7 and 8.
10. In His Olivet Discourse, our Lord described these birth pangs as "the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:8).

11. These birth pangs include religious deceivers, wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.
12. Certainly we are getting very close to the consummation of the age. Let us do our best to get the Gospel out in the time God has given us!

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