

Millennial Blessings; Contrasting Responses to God's Grace

Isaiah 56-57

Isaiah 56:1-8 - *"Thus says the Lord: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. ² Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."*

³ Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, "The Lord has utterly separated me from His people." Nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree." ⁴ For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, ⁵ even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. ⁶ "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants— everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant— ⁷ even them 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 nations." ⁸ The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, "Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him."

Background Notes

Unbelieving critics of the Bible take the position that the "Isaiah of 700 BC" actually wrote only the first division of the book - chapters 1-39. They claim that an alternate or "deutero-Isaiah" wrote chapters 40-66 at a later date. They hold that position because some of the specific prophecies in this second division of the book were clearly fulfilled in Jesus Christ - such as the clear prophecies of the Suffering Messiah in Isaiah 53. And those unbelievers do not - and will not - believe in the miracle of fulfilled prophecy.

Their critical theories have no substance for the following reasons:

a. There is not a shred of historical evidence for their theories.

b. The entire book of Isaiah was found in the Dead Sea scrolls, which date well before the coming of Christ. There is no evidence in the Isaiah scroll in the Dead Sea Scrolls of anything other than a unified Isaiah written by one author.

c. All quotations of Isaiah in the New Testament are attributed to the one Isaiah of the Old Testament.

Doctrinal Points

1. There will be millennial blessings for Jews and Gentiles.

When we say “millennial blessings,” we’re referring to the blessings of the future time when the Lord will return and establish His worldwide kingdom. This kingdom will continue for 1000 years, according to Revelation 20. While there are many spiritual blessings for Christians and for the Church today, the blessings mentioned in Isaiah 56:1-8 were specifically made *in the context of the Lord’s millennial kingdom*.

Isaiah 55 revealed that Israel would be restored and Gentiles would be redeemed because of the finished work of the Servant Messiah. In our Talk on Isaiah 55 we said that *in the context*, this redemption of the Gentiles specifically referred to the time immediately before the Lord’s return. Why? Because before then Israel will not be restored to the Lord. The conversion of the Gentiles was linked with the restoration of Israel.

Again, the context of the blessings in Isaiah 56 was the return of Israel to the Lord and to the Land. Verse 8: “*The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.”*” And in this chapter, the blessings will come upon the Gentiles only when the dispersed and outcast or exiles of Israel have returned - not only to the Land but also to the Lord. Then many Gentiles will be redeemed and gathered to restored Israel, and they will be blessed.

In the Millennium, there will be a Temple in Jerusalem, and certain feasts and Sabbaths and sacrifices will be kept. (Read Ezekiel 40-48 also in this connection.) And in the Millennium, eunuchs will not be barred from the Temple courts as they were under the Law (Deuteronomy 23). Gentiles will be welcomed into the Temple courts to worship the Lord – in fact, the millennial temple will be known as a house of prayer for all nations (v7)! Millennial blessings will be for both Jews and Gentiles.

Isaiah 56:9-12 - “*All you beasts of the field, come to devour, all you beasts in the forest. ¹⁰ His watchmen are blind. They are all ignorant. They are all dumb dogs; they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber. ¹¹ Yes, they are greedy dogs that never have enough, and they are shepherds who cannot understand. They all look to their own way, every one for his own gain from his own territory. ¹² “Come,” one says, “I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink. Tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant.”*”

In these verses Isaiah returned to the dark spiritual and moral condition of Israel in his day. Would you ever buy a watchdog that didn’t bark – and only slept? That’s what false prophets are like – both then and today (v10). They don’t warn of danger. They’re like shepherds who are more interested in their selfish pursuit of gain and pleasure than in the welfare of the sheep (v11-12). As a result of the ungodly leadership in Israel, God allowed foreign enemies like Assyria and Babylonia to invade and devour Israel (v9).

In chapter 57, we will see the result in Israel - and in any nation that has ungodly leaders.

2. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Isaiah 57:1-13 - *"The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart. Merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. ² He shall enter into peace. They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. ³ "But come here, you sons of the sorceress, you offspring of the adulterer and the harlot! ⁴ Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth, and stick out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression - offspring of falsehood? ⁵ Inflaming yourselves with gods under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? ⁶ Among the smooth stones of the stream is your portion; they, they are your lot! Even to them you have poured a drink offering, you have offered a grain offering. Should I receive comfort in these? ⁷ "On a lofty and high mountain you have set your bed. Even there you went up to offer sacrifice. ⁸ Also behind the doors and their posts you have set up your remembrance; For you have uncovered yourself to those other than Me, and have gone up to them. You have enlarged your bed and made a covenant with them. You have loved their bed, where you saw their nudity. You went to the king with ointment, and increased your perfumes. You sent your messengers far off, and even descended to Sheol. ¹⁰ You are wearied in the length of your way, yet you did not say, 'There is no hope.' You have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved. And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, that you have lied and not remembered Me, nor taken it to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old that you do not fear Me? ¹² I will declare your righteousness and your works, for they will not profit you. ¹³ When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you. But the wind will carry them all away. A breath will take them."*

Our doctrinal point for chapter 57 is a direct quotation from James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5: *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* This biblical truth is certainly taught in Isaiah 57. When rulers are ungodly, the number of righteous people in a nation is diminished (v1-2). In fact, in His grace the Lord will take some of the righteous home to Heaven where they finally find peace, far from this morally corrupt world.

When rulers and leaders are ungodly, the percentage of the population who practice wickedness will increase - and the number of godly people who do what is right will shrink (v3-10). The ungodly people in ancient Israel mocked and ridiculed the people of the nation who were trying to do what was right (v3-4).

Verses 5-8 described Israel's involvement in false pagan religions that involved sexually immoral "fertility rites" and child sacrifice on the hills and the valleys of the land. They even wore themselves out, making journeys to foreign lands to worship their pagan gods with special offerings of oils and perfumes (v9-10)! But is our own nation any better than ancient Israel? Think of the false religions, the low moral standards and the killing of the unborn that are part of the post-Christian culture in our country today.

In verses 11-13 the Lord told the people that their self-righteousness would not measure up to His requirements, and the collection of idols in which they put their trust would not be able to deliver them. Instead, these useless objects would be blown away!

But he who puts his trust in Me will inherit the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain. ¹⁴ And one shall say, "Heap it up! Heap it up! Prepare the way! Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people."

¹⁵ For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

¹⁶ For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry, for the spirit would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made. ¹⁷ For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, and he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. ¹⁸ I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners. ¹⁹ "I create the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," says the Lord, "and I will heal him."

The good news came at the end of verse 13 through verse 19, with the prophecy that the Lord's anger will come to an end, and He will bring peace and healing and restoration to His people! The good news of these verses can be applied in general to anyone who turns to the Lord. However, *in the context*, the prophecy is specifically for the godly remnant of Jews who will be restored to the Lord in the End Times.

Notice the end of verse 13: *"But he who puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain."* The "land" here is **Israel** (not the Church, as is sometimes proposed). And "My holy mountain" is not the Church! **Jerusalem** is God's "holy mountain," where the millennial Temple will be located. Yes, the Lord had to contend with His chosen people over the years, and discipline them for their pride and unbelief, but in the end a humble godly remnant will be restored to the Land and to the Lord. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Practical Application

There is no rest for the wicked.

Isaiah 57:20-21 – *"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ²¹ "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."*

When someone is very busy and stressed they sometimes use the expression, "There's no rest for the weary!" (In fact, we may have said it ourselves!) But according to the Bible, there **is** rest for the weary. There's the rest and peace that comes with our salvation, and Jesus said there's "*rest for your soul*" when you come to Him (Matthew 11:28-29).

But there is no peace or rest for the wicked! Wicked people may look like they're happy, and they may tell you they have peace and rest - but it's a lie!

God has declared that in His moral universe **there is no rest for the wicked.**