

## Isaiah 65:1-25

### “True Or False?”

Last week we were looking at the vanity of works-based righteousness. Specifically revolving around the 6<sup>th</sup> Vs of Ch 64. *“But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;”*<sup>1</sup> The idea being that it’s impossible to bring a clean thing (a pure work) out of an unclean/impure thing (our sin nature). It’s impossible to do a *righteous* work, from an *unrighteous* position. (Meaning, perfect righteousness would be w/out sin. But since we have a sin nature, we can’t produce nor bring to fruition a work untouched by sin). *Therefore it’s impossible to commend ourselves to God on the basis of what we do* (I pray, I read my bible, I volunteer at a charity organization etc) or what we *don’t do* (I don’t drink, I don’t have pre-marital or extra-marital relations, I don’t cuss etc). *The only thing that commends us to God is the perfect righteousness attributed to us in Christ.*

So that, it’s no longer *my* works that God sees, but the work of Christ *through* me which is the fruit of *His* righteousness *in* me. That’s what I wanted to clarify. We’re not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *unto* good works. As Paul the apostle said, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*<sup>2</sup> To the Philippians he said it like this, *“...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”*<sup>3</sup> *So, I hope that give a little clarity. If it’s something you’re doing... filthy rag. If it’s something He’s doing in & through you... the fruit of righteousness. & They can look the same outwardly. It could be your giving, your serving, choosing to not do this or that... But the difference is where those things stem from inwardly. A desire to make yourself acceptable to God, or because you’re allowing yourself to be molded, transformed by God. One is trying to win His love, the other is the overflow of His love...*

Ok... Since Vs 15 of Ch 63 we’ve been privy to a beautiful, emotionally impactful prayer. – In Ch’s 65-66 we find God’s reply to that prayer. Let’s look together.

### Vs 1-7

Wow... This isn’t really the kind of response we might expect after pouring out our hearts to God! Yet God is ready/prepared (when necessary) to administer what the Bible refers to as a “faithful wound”. Meaning, He’s not in the business of telling us what we *want* to hear, but what we *need* to hear!

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version* (Is 64:6). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version* (Eph 2:10). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version* (Php 2:13). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Sometimes, what we *need* is a response that speaks to us in a revealing, convicting way... Throughout the prayer of the previous Ch's the remnant has been pouring out their heart to God, "Oh God, we need You to break through, we're suffering, we're struggling, our enemies have trodden down Your sanctuary! Intervene! Intercede! Rend the heavens & save us!" & The way God responds (in these 1<sup>st</sup> 7 Vs) isn't really what we'd refer to as the warmest of responses. In fact, it's a confrontational reply regarding the sin still found in His people!

He's essentially saying, "Look, you're *talking* like you're seeking Me, but you're really *not* seeking Me at all!" Now, obviously this isn't a categorical statement regarding every individual citizen of Judah (we'll see in a bit that there's still a faithful remnant). But as a nation collectively/generally, they're really not seeking God at all!

So He tells them (beginning in Vs 1) that because they weren't seeking Him (not truly), because their seeking Him was smoke & mirrors, it was disingenuous, it was rites & rituals, but nothing sincere & from the heart, He was going to be found by those who *didn't* seek Him, found by those who *didn't* ask for Him, namely the Gentiles. If Israel didn't want what God had to offer, then He would give it to nations *other* than Israel!

If Israel did not want what God had to offer, then He would give it to others. & Paul quotes from this passage in the book of Romans w/respect to the gospel going forth & being *received* by the Gentiles, while being *rejected* by the Jews. He says, "*But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.' But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.'"*<sup>4</sup> Isaiah was "very bold" because he was confronting a people of shallow repentance, who considered themselves a cut above everyone else in holiness all the while being sinful & rebellious against the Lord!

**\*I don't if you've ever tried to help someone understand the fact that they have some things in their life that need addressed when they consider themselves a cut above the rest... but it isn't easy! ☺ Isaiah was talking to a *nation* like that!**

God says, "I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk (or live) in a way that is not good..." (Define, "not good"), "Who walk (or live life) according to their own thoughts..." Wow... Do you understand what this is saying? What we're reading here is that to trust in our own wisdom, our own rationale, our own thoughts...

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<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version* (Ro 10:20-21). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Is to take our number among a rebellious people (think about that)... It's a principle that's articulated again & again throughout the Word of God. In the book of Judges it's stated like this, *"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*<sup>5</sup> It's the American dream. Today we say it like this, "You do you!" "Whatever is right for you!" & What sounds like blissful freedom is (in reality) horrible bondage to sin! In the book of Proverbs, we read it like this, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."*<sup>6</sup>

I'm just gonna throw this out there, we hear a lot about, "Well, what's in your heart?" Or, "Follow your heart". It's some of the worst advice you could possibly receive! Your heart is deceitful & wicked (Jer 17:9)! The better place is to ask, "What's in God's heart?" "What's God's word have to say & share on the matter?" You do what you want to do, you'll drift from God & justify every step along the way, every degree you drift...\*

Listen, we could spend our entire time searching out this section of scripture, but the basic gist is this. \* God is reaching, they're resisting, He's reaching, they're rebelling. & I want you to understand this, that's always the way it is. God always initiates, man always responds. It's Divine initiative, & human responsibility. God is always reaching out, some receive, others reject (or rebel, or resist).

Study the gospels, Jesus was always extending the invitation, "Come follow Me". Some responded & received, others resisted or all out rejected. Some will open their heart in repentance, others make excuses as to why they can't, or perhaps later (ad infinitum to the reasons people conjure up). Why? At the end of the day, they'd rather feed the flesh & walk in sin than crucify the flesh & be led of the Spirit. People love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil... It's amazing all the excuses that evaporate when a person is ready to repent. But when they want to keep wallowing in the mire, they always seem to fail to have faith. \*

Pertaining to our text, they just worshipped God however they felt like it. They did what they wanted rather than what God's word instructed. So they sacrificed in gardens (rather than at the temple), they burned incense on altars of brick (ornate altars rather than the simple altars of stone God had commanded). They were involved in occult like practices, necromancy, (sitting among the graves, spending the night in the tombs). Back in Ch 8 Isaiah rebuked concerning this saying, "Why seek the dead on behalf of the living?"

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version* (Jdg 17:6), (1982). Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version* (Pr 14:12), (1982). Thomas Nelson.

“To the law & the testimony!” The idea is, “Go to God’s word when you need direction, not some graveyard or some medium!” You see this in movies all the time! Someone will be in some sort of way, so they’ll go to the cemetery, stand over some’s grave & seek advice, they’re there trying to sort out life among the dead...

\*But the people of Judah were doing all these things. Not seeking God’s Word, going w/what they *felt* was right, w/their own thoughts, then they had the audacity to consider themselves, “Holier than thou”. Better than the others around them, that others were a little beneath them. Guys, this is how you know you’re becoming *religious* rather than drawing near in a relationship w/God. Religion will always give you a sense of self-righteous superiority over others. They’re not really on your level... It’s the blindness brought on by pride...\*

God says, “These people smoke in My nostrils...” Whatever that may mean specifically (draw your own analogy) I can tell you it’s not good! So God tells them, “Judgment is coming, you’ll be repaid in full for your sin.”

### Vs 8-16

Do you see what’s happening here? God is responding, replying to a praying people. But there are 2 *kinds* of people represented that He’s addressing. Those who are true & those who are false. Those who are seeking Him genuinely & those who seek Him *religiously*, outwardly (it’s pretense, not legitimately or honestly)... It comes back to God searching the heart! God *knows* when we’re *sincere* before Him or just jumping through hoops & playing the game, trying to “work the system”.

& He’s well able to *preserve* those who seek Him genuinely & at the same time *reserve* those who are going through the motions, (in hypocrisy), for judgment. The analogy He uses is that of a cluster of grapes. It’s in Vs 8. Essentially, He says, “When you have good grapes in a bad cluster, you don’t discard it all, you save the good & get rid of the bad. Even so, there are some godly people in this otherwise ungodly nation. So I won’t destroy the whole nation, I’ll preserve, protect & provide for the faithful remnant.” & He promises to regather His elect & deliver to them their land (Vs 9-10).

The point here is that God made a promise to Abraham... & Even though a large part of Israel has been unfaithful to God, that won’t stifle or frustrate His promises or purposes concerning His coming kingdom. He isn’t finished w/Israel (replacement theology is bad, unbiblical theology), He will fulfill His word to the nation.

In Vs 12 He comes back to the *ungodly*, the *unfaithful*.

\*“But you are those who *forsake* the Lord, who *forget* My holy mountain.” (Btw that’s always the manner in which it takes place, 1<sup>st</sup> we forsake, then we forget). Rather than honoring God, they took up idolatry. They made offerings to Gad & Meni (Fortune & Destiny). (Sounds like America today doesn’t it? We’ve forsaken God’s word, God’s way & sacrifice for fortune & destiny).

So He tells them that judgment is on the way. Why? “Because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear. But did evil before My eyes, & chose that in which I do not delight.” This sort of circles us back to Vs 2, “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who live in a way that isn’t good, according to their own thoughts.” “I called, you didn’t answer!” We all love that caller I.D. don’t we? We seen a number we don’t recognize, or name we don’t want to deal w/at the moment... we don’t answer. **God says, “I’ve been calling you all day every day! But you won’t respond!” God’s knocking, but we’re hiding in the back room hoping He just goes away. We don’t want to deal w/the conviction, don’t want to turn from our sin just yet. We just stuff it down, ignore the call... & Listen, it’s one thing to sin through weakness, to sin through ignorance (still sin, still needs dealt with).** But it’s another thing altogether refusing to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit over sin in our lives... We speed down the highway, we’re breaking the law, but when those flashing red/blue lights show up & you *just keep speeding*... You’ve entered another level of rebellion (& it’s not going to end well for you)!\*

& This is what God is saying in Vs 13-16. The results & ramifications of *righteousness* are *vastly, radically* different than those of *wickedness*. Those who truly seek the Lord will be blessed. Those who are pretentious, pious, religious & hypocritical will be cursed.

In Vs 16, “The God of *truth*” is more literally, “The God of Amen”. He’s the One who “Amen’s” all His promises. Affirms & confirms them. Paul promoted this principle to the Corinthians like this, “*For all the promises of God in Him* (in Christ) *are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*”<sup>7</sup>

### Vs 17-19

We speak occasionally of this term, “prophetic telescoping”. We’ve been kind of volleying back & forth between Isaiah’s time & the millennial reign of Christ when God rights all these wrongs. When He brings peace & harmony, safety, prosperity & security. Here in Vs 17 he launches all the way out beyond the millennial reign of Christ to that eternal state whereby God creates all things new (then he’ll snap right back to the millennial kingdom).

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version* (2 Co 1:20). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

God's ultimate answer to the sinful state of man is to simply make all things new. You'll have new, resurrection body. He'll create new heavens (new atmosphere) & a new earth, & all this sinful state of man's being will be put completely out of our minds. We'll know nothing but the holy, righteous love & blessing of God forever & ever...

Now; when God says, "I create new heavens & new earth;" don't think of a grand and glorious remodel. We touched on this last week. The day is coming when this world, this universe will burn in a fervent heat & will be incinerated in a moment's time. Let's look at it again. \* 2 Peter 3:10-13

Here's the idea. Since this material world will dissolve, does it make a lot of sense to be materialistic in your pursuits? Our focus should be on the *spiritual*, not on the *material*, the *eternal*, not on the *temporal*. \*

Because God is going to do away w/all of this! Listen, there are 2 words in Hebrew that translate "Create". One, man can do, the other, only *God* can do. One is "Asa". It means to reassemble of existing materials. **Someone builds a house, they take materials that exist & restructure & assemble them to create that house (or car or computer or anything else man creates). The other word is "Bara". It means to create something out of nothing. Only God has that capacity.** Genesis 1:1, **"In the beginning God created (Bara) the heavens and the earth."**<sup>8</sup> God didn't take a spinning mass of celestial chaos & put something together. There was *nothing*, God spoke, & there was something. "Let there be light" "Light was".

That's the word "Bara" that's used here in Isaiah 65:17. He's not going to make what we have look really awesome. This whole thing will be dissolved & He'll create something (out of nothing) that's brand new... & You & me, we're going to see Him do it! 😊 John mentions it in the book of Rev (21:1). & We read there that God will wipe away every tear from our eyes; no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying... There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. – Eternal joy in the presence of our God...

Now, beginning in Vs 20, Isaiah snaps back to the millennial kingdom. How do we know that? Because he speaks of death (which will no longer exist in the new creation that God creates). But in the millennial kingdom of Christ (on this earth) death will still be around. Notice.

### Vs 20-25

When Jesus is reigning on the earth, conditions will be much the same biologically/ecologically as they were before the flood.

<sup>8</sup> The New King James Version (Ge 1:1), (1982). Thomas Nelson.

There will be tremendous longevity of life. So much so that Isaiah tells us if someone dies at 100 yrs old, it'll be like the tragic death of an infant!

(I should also point out this Vs doesn't apply to us, because we'll already be inhabiting our resurrection bodies, never to taste death again). So there will be 2 types of people on the earth during the time in which Christ is ruling. There will be those who enter His kingdom having survived the great tribulation, having come to faith in Him & somehow escaped martyrdom. & There will be those of us who return w/Christ in our resurrection bodies who will govern the earth in some fashion under His rule.

But these people who enter from the Great Tribulation will repopulate the earth. They'll have children & grandchildren & they'll live incredibly long lives. My presumption is that most of them who are born *into* the kingdom will live throughout the duration of the kingdom. They'll build houses, but no one else will inherit them. There will be plenty of prosperity, the bank won't repossess them. There won't be anyone steal from them, there will be plenty for everyone & it'll be a time of peace & harmony, permanence & stability unparalleled in human history.

& One of the reasons this will be a reality is because we learn in Rev 20 that Satan will be bound for these 1,000 yrs & cast into the bottomless pit. So he won't be around to work his deceitful, destructive mischief.

Another reason it'll be so peaceful is found in Vs 23. They won't bring forth children for trouble, for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord. In other words, everyone who enters the millennial kingdom will be believers.

That doesn't mean that everyone *born* throughout that time will be saved. We know they won't be because Satan will be released at the end of the 1,000 yrs & find plenty of people ready & willing to rebel against the Lord 1 final time. **Close**

But that opportunity for intimacy w/the Lord will be there unlike ever before. When people begin to pray, the Lord will answer before they even finish speaking... It'll be a time *not only* of biological and social transformation. But of profound spiritual transformation as well. There'll be an immediate and constant sense of the presence of God, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea...

& My suspicion would be that although not all will be saved on the millennial earth, the proportions will more than likely be reversed from what they are today. Today, a remnant is saved & the vast majority are lost. Broad is the way that leads to destruction & many go that way. Because narrow/difficult is the way that lead to life, & few find it.

When Jesus is ruling, I trust that the vast majority will know Him & be saved *by* Him, but there will be those who (for whatever reason) reject Him.

But that's not for you or me to concern ourselves with today. What you need to worry about *today* is where *you're* at & where *you* stand concerning J.C. – To turn from your sin & believe on Him is to be saved. To walk in your own way, according to your own thoughts is to be lost. Look *to* Him, believe *on* Him & be saved...

### Prayer Points:

Father search us & know our hearts, try us & know our anxieties & insecurities, & whatever wicked way You may find, lead us in the way everlasting. Thank You for loving us, for being gracious toward us & patient with us. Strengthen us that our lives might bring honor & glory to Your name.

I won't belabor the point. If today is the day that you turn from your sin & believe on J.C. that you might be saved from this wicked & perverse generation, then don't delay. The blood of J.C. is sufficient to cleanse you of all your sin & make you new in the sight of God.