

## ***Session 4 The Forerunner Message in Isaiah 56-59***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. Many commentaries see Isaiah 56-59 as one section that has two distinct parts—chapters 56-57 and chapters 58-59. Each part ends with glorious, prophetic promises of the Lord’s coming to help His people (57:13b-19 and 59:15b-21). Isaiah 56-59 is a call to respond to the Lord in faith, walking in righteousness (56:1-2; 57:1; 58:8; 59:9, 14-17) with humility (57:15; 58:5), along with the assurance of being accepted on God’s holy mountain (56:7; 57:13; 58:6; 59:20).
- B. What happens *in fullness* when Jesus returns occurs *in part* now and in an increasing way. These promises in Isaiah 56-59 had a partial application to the redeemed in Isaiah’s generation and to believers in Christ in this age, with the fullness of these promises in the age to come.

C. Outline for Isaiah 56-59

**56-57 God’s blessing offered to all; any who refuse Him will be judged**

- 56:1-8 All who honor God’s covenant will experience salvation  
56:9-57:13a Ungodly leadership in Israel  
57:13b-21 God blesses and dwells with the humble on His holy mountain

**58-59 False religion contrasted with relationship with God**

- 58:1-5 The worthless fasting of religious hypocrites  
58:6-14 The fast that God has chosen  
59:1-8 A nation filled with sin and injustice  
59:9-15a Israel’s future national confession of sin  
59:15b-21 Jesus brings salvation as the Divine Warrior

### **II. ALL WHO HONOR GOD’S COVENANT WILL EXPERIENCE SALVATION (ISA. 56:1-8)**

- A. Blessed is the one who keeps justice, does righteousness, and refuses evil (56:1-2).

***<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. <sup>2</sup>Blessed is the man who does this and...lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.” (Isa. 56:1-2)***

1. ***Keep justice:*** All who receive the free gift of salvation (55:1-3) are to practice justice and righteousness (56:1). A life of obedience is a *response* to receiving salvation, not the *condition* for receiving it. Justice and righteousness are combined 16 times in Isaiah.
2. ***My salvation is about to come:*** This speaks of Jesus’ first coming to pay the price for our sin, but ultimately Isaiah is referring to Jesus’ second coming when His righteousness will be openly revealed to all the nations and the redeemed are rescued (2 Thes. 1:6-10).

***<sup>6</sup>...it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, <sup>7</sup>and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, <sup>8</sup>in flaming fire...<sup>10</sup>when He comes, in that Day... (2 Thes. 1:6-10)***

- B. All who seek the Lord will be accepted in God’s kingdom (56:3-8). The Lord promised them blessing and honor in the temple on God’s holy mountain (56:7). The Lord promises to treat foreigners (Gentile believers) and eunuchs with honor and equality.
- <sup>3</sup>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.” <sup>4</sup>...“To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths...and hold fast My covenant even to them, <sup>5</sup>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...<sup>6</sup>Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD...to love the name of the LORD...<sup>7</sup>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.” <sup>8</sup>The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him others [Gentile believers] besides those who are gathered to him.” (Isa. 56:3-8)*
- C. After identifying the complaint of the believers who were foreigners and eunuchs (56:3), Isaiah highlighted God’s promises that establish their status as having equal privilege before God.
- D. **Son of the foreigner:** They were people without a godly heritage, who lived entrenched in sin and the occult, having worshipped and sacrificed to idols, that is, to demons (1 Cor. 10:20).
- <sup>20</sup>...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice [to idols] they sacrifice to demons and not to God. (1 Cor. 10:20)*
- E. **To the eunuchs:** Eunuchs had no status or position of honor in society and no children to remember them or to care for them in their old age (which was essential in the ancient world). The Lord originally excluded eunuchs from the temple to teach His people to understand that there are consequences for destroying sexual organs that He created.
- F. The Lord is clarifying that no one will be excluded from the full privileges of salvation because of their ethnicity, family status, religious heritage, past sinfulness, or personal defects (eunuch). Being in covenant with God is not about our status or history, but our relationship with Jesus.
- G. The reason that the Lord initially called Israel to be separate from the nations was to keep them from being absorbed into the darkness of nations and thereby lose their ability to function as God’s messengers who were to call the nations out of darkness into His salvation.
- H. **Keep My Sabbaths:** Honoring the Sabbath was a way that Israel expressed their honor for God. It was a distinctive element in Jewish culture that helped to hold the Jewish people together throughout history, especially when they were not in the Land.
- I. New Covenant believers should honor the “sabbath principle” without being required to do it on a specific day of the week. The requirement for Christians to honor the Sabbath on Saturday or Sunday is never mentioned in the New Testament. Paul encouraged believers not to be judgmental related to requiring festivals or Sabbaths (Rom. 14:5-6; Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 4:9-10)
- <sup>16</sup>So let no one judge you...regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, <sup>17</sup>which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. (Col. 2:16-17)*

- J. ***In My house and within My walls:*** in the millennial city and/or temple. This is an honor that far surpasses what an earthly family member could give them. Isaiah was not minimizing the value of being honored within one's family; being openly honored by Jesus in Jerusalem is far greater.
- K. ***A place and a name:*** The Lord promised to them a name and place in His house and within the walls of the temple or city of Jerusalem. A name that is better is one that results in them receiving more honor and privileges in the kingdom— which lasts longer than the honor and privileges than sons and daughters could give them by honoring their name.
- L. I see four applications of the promise in 56:5, which will be fulfilled in various degrees.
1. The foreigners (Gentiles) and eunuchs in Isaiah's day (and up to the time that Jesus died on the cross) who embraced a life of obedience to the Lord were blessed with privileged access to worship in the temple in Jerusalem according to the laws of Moses.
  2. Believers in Jesus who walked in obedience are blessed with experiencing a greater measure of His presence in this age as they engage in worship at the throne in heaven.  
*<sup>21</sup>He who...[keeps] My commandments...will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...<sup>23</sup>If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (Jn. 14:21-23)*
  3. Gentiles living on the earth in the Millennium who walk in consistent obedience to God may live in and/or visit Jerusalem to worship and to be taught by Jesus (2:2-3; 54:13).
  4. Jesus promised to make believers who overcome in this life pillars in His heavenly temple, pillars in positions of authority and honor in His temple in the age to come.  
*<sup>12</sup>"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the...name of...the New Jerusalem..." (Rev. 3:12)*
- M. ***My holy Mountain:*** One of the Lord's salvation purposes is to bring His people to His mountain (2:3; 11:9; 25:6; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20).
- N. ***Make them joyful in My house of prayer:*** Enjoyable prayer before a beautiful God is for all.
- O. ***My house shall be called a house of prayer:*** The identity of the redeemed throughout eternity is rooted in being "God's House" or His Family that releases His resources into the natural realm. To be *the house of prayer* means that God speaks and moves our heart, then we speak and move His heart. The result is that God's resources are released into the earthly realm. Our greatest place of authority, honor, dignity, and security is found in this reality. The governmental center of the universe is the "house of prayer" which includes all the redeemed throughout history.
- P. ***Burnt offerings:*** "Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on My altar" (56:7).
- Q. ***Gathers the outcasts:*** At the end of the age, the Lord will gather both the "outcasts of Israel" and others besides—meaning, Gentiles who want to be joined to Him (56:3, 6, 8).

### III. UNGODLY LEADERSHIP IN ISRAEL (ISA. 56:9-57:13)

- A. Isaiah described Israel's wicked leaders who were blind, lazy, greedy drunkards (59:9-12). Isaiah gave three pictures of Israel's national leadership—as watchmen, dogs, and shepherds.

<sup>9</sup>*All you beasts of the field, come to devour, all you beasts in the forest. <sup>10</sup>His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber...<sup>11</sup>and they are shepherds who cannot understand...* (Isa. 56:9-11)

- B. **Watchmen:** The “prophets” were blind to the sin and danger coming to Israel (56:10).

- C. **Dumb dogs:** Watchdogs that do not bark are useless for the task given them.

- D. **Shepherds:** This refers to national leaders responsible to feed, guide, and protect the people.

- E. God summoned them to “come” before Him to pronounce judgment on them (57:3). These evil leaders mocked the godly (57:4) and engaged in idol worship with child sacrifice (57:5-12).

<sup>3</sup>*“But come here, you sons of the sorceress, you offspring of the adulterer and the harlot! <sup>4</sup>Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth and stick out the tongue?”* (Isa. 57:3-4)

### IV. GOD BLESSES AND DWELLS WITH THE HUMBLE ON HIS MOUNTAIN (ISA. 57:13B-21)

- A. God will heal the humble and bring them to His holy mountain (57:13). This is the ultimate blessing because Jesus will dwell there. The Lord will commission the building of a road for His people to come to Jerusalem (57:14). To *heap up* refers to building up a “roadbed” to prepare a highway for Jewish people to walk to the land of Israel (57:14; 62:10).

<sup>13</sup>*“But he who puts his trust in Me shall possess the land and shall inherit My holy mountain.”*  
<sup>14</sup>*And one shall say, “Heap it up! Heap it up! Prepare the way, take the stumbling block out of the way of My people.””* (Isa. 57:13b-14)

- B. God promised to dwell with the humble (57:15).

<sup>15</sup>*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.”* (Isa. 57:15)

- C. God will not always be angry with Israel (57:16). The Lord promised to heal, lead, restore, and bring to peace those who mourned over their sin (57:1,19; Rev. 1:7).

<sup>16</sup>*“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. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will also lead him and restore comforts to him and to his mourners. <sup>19</sup>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.” (Isa. 57:16-19)

V. FALSE RELIGION CONTRASTED WITH RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (ISAIAH 58-59)

- A. Isaiah exposed the worthless fasting of religious hypocrites (58:1-5). The Lord's people did not understand why God had not blessed them since they had fasted and prayed and thought that they humbled themselves. Isaiah described "the fast that God has chosen" (58:6-14).
- B. Many in Israel relied on their zeal to uphold certain practices in the Mosaic rites to satisfy God. However, they did not embrace the spiritual meaning of these rites. God intended the Mosaic law and its worship practices to be a picture of how to have a deep relationship with Him.

VI. A NATION FILLED WITH SIN AND INJUSTICE (ISA. 59:1-8)

- A. Isaiah describes a most severe spiritual and moral breakdown of society in Israel (59:1-8). He graphically pictures Israel's most severe apostasy which will occur in the generation the Lord returns. God will answer this generation by personally coming in eschatological events to rescue those who repent and to punish those who persist in their rebellion (59:15b-21).
- B. Isaiah assured them that God did not answer them because of their sin, not because of His lack of power (a shortened hand) or His lack of desire (a heavy ear).

***<sup>1</sup>Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. <sup>2</sup>But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. (Isa. 59:1-2)***

- 1. Isaiah 59:1 parallels the question and statements that were made in 50:1-3. When the nations rise up in hostility against Israel, instead of looking to the Lord for help, Israel's leaders will make a covenant with the Antichrist that will result in giving their authority to him seven years before Jesus' coming (Isa. 28:14-18; Ezek. 38:8-12; Dan. 9:27; 11:45; 14; 39:26; Zech. 11:16; Lk. 19:11-28; Jn. 5:43; 1 Thes. 5:3).  
***<sup>2</sup>...Why, when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? ...With My rebuke I dry up the sea ... (Isa. 50:2)***
- 2. ***None to answer***: This speaks of a time when Israel is fearful of a military attack (50:2). The Lord would save them from the Antichrist if they would only respond to Him.
- 3. ***Your sins have hidden His face***: The problem was not God's lack of power or desire to help Israel, but their rebellion against Him which caused God to hide His face.
- C. Their society will be filled with bloodshed, with no national leaders taking a stand for justice (59:4). Vipers' eggs and the spider's web speak of unsolvable problems that multiply (59:5).  
***<sup>3</sup>For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity. <sup>4</sup>No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth...<sup>5</sup>They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; he who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed a viper breaks out. (Isa. 59:3-5)***

- D. God declared that there was *no justice* in the nation or the government (59:4, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15).  
*<sup>8</sup>The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways... (Isa. 59:8)*
- E. Isaiah prayed in a way that expressed Israel's future national confession of sin (59:9-15a).  
*<sup>9</sup>...justice is far from us...we look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness! <sup>10</sup>We grope for the wall like the blind...<sup>11</sup>We all growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves; we look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us... <sup>12</sup>For our transgressions are multiplied before You...for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them. <sup>14</sup>...for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. <sup>15</sup>So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. (Isa. 59:9-15a)*
1. ***We look for light:*** They had hoped for a bright future to result from their covenant with the Antichrist, seemingly a “man of peace,” but it became great darkness (60:1-2).
  2. ***We look for salvation:*** They were looking for their salvation (59:11). Israel and the nations will worship the Antichrist, seeing him as their savior and messiah (Rev. 13:8).

## VII. JESUS BRINGS SALVATION AS THE DIVINE WARRIOR (ISA. 59:15B-21)

- A. Isaiah tells us what the Lord saw and what He will do (59:15b-21).  
*<sup>15</sup>...Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. <sup>16</sup>He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. <sup>17</sup>For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal as a cloak. (Isa. 59:15-17)*
1. ***He wondered:*** This expresses His displeasure at their lack of restraint of wickedness.
  2. ***No intercessor:*** He saw that there was no person in the government who could turn the nation around. There was no champion like Phineas who rose up with zeal (Num. 25).
  3. ***Righteousness as a breastplate:*** Jesus has righteousness motives for judging the Antichrist's empire. He puts on the helmet of salvation, indicating His good plans.
- B. The fear of the name of the Lord will increase in the nations of the west and the east (59:19-20).  
*<sup>19</sup>So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun [the east]; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. <sup>20</sup>The Redeemer will come to Zion [Jesus' coming] ... (Isa. 59:19-20)*
- C. He covenanted to release His power in partnership with His people who will function forever as His house of prayer by speaking and singing God's words (59:21; 56:7).  
*<sup>21</sup>This is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth [prophetic intercession], shall not depart from your mouth... (Isa. 59:21)*