

**The Challenge to Live Differently
Salvation = Being = Doing
Doing ≠ Salvation
Isaiah 56:1 – 12**

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We have now gone through Isaiah in detail from chapter 1 to chapter 55. We began with the northern kingdom of Israel thoroughly apostate and Judah still having a slim chance but by the time we come to chapter 55, we know that Judah is also becoming apostate and will be judged, leading to the Suffering Servant to achieve that which was not achieved by God's people, pointing the nations to God.

We concluded chapter 55 looking at the future, the mercy of God and discovering what the rule of Messiah will be like. Isaiah is not done yet; other things need to be said, and it is Isaiah who is the one to say them. Again, the entire book was written by Isaiah.

That which needed to be added to what has already been said is simple...“The central idea is the necessity of living out God's righteousness, and the inability or failure of the people to do so.” (Oswalt 1998, 452)

The nation had already moved down a path reflecting that this was not doable for them at this moment in time. More must be said by Isaiah, he is not done yet.

I say this because just as we have already discussed before, there are commentaries out there that say a third Isaiah is responsible for this section; on top of their allegation of a second Isaiah. I do not agree with the second Isaiah idea or the third Isaiah idea simply because Jesus attributed it all to Isaiah including this section (Luke 4:17 – 19).

If Jesus says it was all from Isaiah, I'm good.

What we see are more of the results which will be seen at the end of the age because of the work of the Suffering Servant. God's grace is still in serious focus here and considering that grace, how do we respond?

Isaiah 56:1–2

“This is what the LORD says: “Guard justice and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is a man who does this, And a son of man who takes hold of it; Who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil.”” (NASB 2020)

Seeing God’s value statement about justice and righteousness at this point in Isaiah is not a surprise to us. We expect this since He is justice, and He is righteousness. As His people, the remnant and all of those who have experienced His grace and mercy which we studied in chapter 55, we are being called to reflect these aspects of God’s attributes.

What is His justice and righteousness? These are two different words in the English, “but in both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament there is only one word group behind these two English terms. (In the Old Testament the terms primarily translate forms of the tsedek word group, and the New Testament members of the dikaios word group.) Therefore, these two terms will be considered together as speaking of one attribute of God.” (Grudem 2020, 243)

God is righteous. It is an attribute.

It is not easy to describe the righteousness of God because it is an aspect of his character, and sin limits our knowledge of him. Yet we know that the righteousness of God is related to the holiness of God and that both are seen in the law of the Old Testament and in the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ. The law is not God’s righteousness; but it is an expression of it, just as a coin is an expression of the die in the mint that produced it. In the law we see the impression of God’s purity, holiness, love, integrity, and perfection. (Boice 2000, 172)

God is righteousness (justice): God’s perfect character is reflected in His perfect deeds. God’s righteousness is His holiness in action. His justice is His righteousness in rule and government. The Hebrew word for “righteous” is tsedek, which means “Rightness, straightness, rectitude; justice of a judge, of a king, of God exhibited in punishing the wicked, or in avenging, delivering, rewarding the righteous.” Another Hebrew word related to righteousness is mishpat, which means “righteous judgment as a judge.” The Greek word for “righteous” is dikaios, which means “of God—just, righteous, with reference to his judgment of men and nations, a righteous judge; of men—upright, just, righteous conforming to the laws of God and man, and living in accordance with them.” God is righteous because He acts at all times in complete conformity with His holy nature and will. God’s righteousness is immutable. (Duffield and Van Cleave 2016, 67)

As believers who have experienced His mercy, the call to guard justice and do righteousness means to be like God. To exhibit His righteousness is everything that is done. We can only do so because of the Holy Spirit in us.

This is not a call to abandon the great commission in favor of social justice. Remember, as the church, we have been called to catch and clean fish, not clean the pond. Because of the Holy Spirit in us, we will reflect Him in what we do and how we live.

At the end of the age, for those living under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all of mankind who remain after the Tribulation and the sheep and goats judgement (Matthew 25: 31 – 46).

Living Jesus style impacts relationships of all kinds and is only achievable through the completed work of the Suffering Servant. “On the cross, Jesus Christ became the punishment for our sins. In dying for our sins, Jesus demonstrated the righteousness of God, for God both condemned sin and freed sinners through the death and resurrection of His Son (Rom. 3:26). Consequently, in Christ we stand fully righteous before God.” (Duffield and Van Cleave 2016, 67-68)

Guarding, keeping watch over, observing justice and doing righteousness are the organic next steps of doing life because of what has been done for us by Jesus Christ on the cross. It is the result of the work of the Suffering Servant, it is what we do because we have experienced His mercy, this does not accomplish salvation, it is the consequence of His salvation.

This will be a normal standard of social interaction at the end of the age. For the church, it should be the norm right now. We have been made whole in Christ. We have His righteousness and should be reflecting Him in all we do today. Why?

Isaiah 56:1b

“... For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed.” (NASB 2020)

Soon and very soon, He is coming back again. This is part of living in anticipation of His return. The Lord is telling us as well as His own people that there is an expectation of obedience for those who have taken Him up on His offer of mercy at no cost.

This call to practice and do because of what has been done and what will be done is not new and will continue. “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”” (Matthew 3:1–2, ESV)

For those of us who have trusted in His completed work on the cross coupled with His resurrection from the dead, and are enjoying the presence of the Holy Spirit, we understand the imperative nature of what is being said here. This is not a suggestion for us to do, no, it is a command. Doing, is an expectation of a life of faith post salvation. James discussed the impact of living in faith on our day-to-day actions.

James 2:14–20

“My brothers and sisters, what good is it for people to say that they have faith if their actions do not prove it? Can that faith save them? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don’t have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, “God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!”—if you don’t give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead. But someone will say, “One person has faith, another has actions.” My answer is, “Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions.” Do you believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe—and tremble with fear. You fool! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless?” (GNB)

Anticipation of the coming salvation was to be an incentive to do justice—just as our hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is an incentive today to lead a holy life. (McGee 1997, 322)

There are benefits involved in the doing as well.

Isaiah 56:2

“Blessed is a man who does this, And a son of man who takes hold of it; Who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil.” (NASB 2020)

Now we are moving from the realm of today to the future when Jesus is on the throne. The Sabbath will be restored in the Millennium. Today we are under grace but there is a day coming where standards will shift, Isaiah addressed this coming day back in chapter 2.

Isaiah 2:2–3

“Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let’s go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; So that He may teach us about His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.” **For the law will go out from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**” (NASB 2020)

We miss that in most studies. When Jesus is on the throne, the Sabbath will be required. Why? What it says in our text and...

Revelation 19:15–16

“From his mouth extends a sharp sword, so that with it he can strike the nations. **He will rule them with an iron rod**, and he stomps the winepress of the furious wrath of God, the All-Powerful. He has a name written on his clothing and on his thigh: “King of kings and Lord of lords.”” (NET)

The why is simple, the law comes from Jerusalem, which is where Jesus is and where God will dwell. Jesus will rule with an iron rod. At the beginning of the Millennium, those who are in, are saved, but they will be in human bodies and will have children, lots of children. Each will individually also need to decide about salvation.

For those who make that decision, we see clearly that they will be blessed because they opt to follow Jesus and demonstrate the decision in the way they choose to live. They follow out of loving devotion to the King, not because they will be thumped because they do, but because they want to.

We do know that by the end of the Millennium, there will those who have not been lovingly loyal, but simply loyal because. Yes, there will be one more rebellion as Satan is released and takes advantage of the sin nature still evident in man, even after the rule and reign of Jesus Christ. We are not told much of that rebellion.

Revelation 20:7–10

“Now when the thousand years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to bring them together for the battle. They are as numerous as the grains of sand in the sea. They went up on the broad plain of the earth and encircled the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and devoured them completely. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they will be tormented there day and night forever and ever.” (NET)

Isaiah 56:3

“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will certainly separate me from His people.” Nor let the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”” (NASB 2020)

For those who are listening to Isaiah as He communicates this in 700BC, what He has just stated is not controversial, it is also expected behavior among those in Judah who are faithfully following YAHWEH.

They are used to the present and the future being communicated this way. But the next statement, pointing to the future, is one they would consider to be controversial. Even the Pharisees of Jesus time had difficulty with it.

Jewish readers and listeners to Isaiah would understand that there is a promise of a future where the nations will be joined with them in worship, but the details were unclear.

Genesis 12:2–3

“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**” (ESV)

We have learned from the translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, specifically the Temple scroll, that there were multiple restrictions on who could enter the Temple.

In other words, the restrictions of Deuteronomy 23 and Leviticus were restated, redefined and added to in order to make clear who could and could not enter. Legalism on display. “These include all who are in a

state of impurity, all lepers or infected persons as well as the blind (45.7–18). Women, boys under 20, and proselytes (after three generations) are restricted to the outer court (39.7; 40.6–7). 4QFlor/4Q174 similarly refers to restrictions on entry into a future temple, basing its list partially on Deuteronomy 23. Thus from there it bans Ammonites, Moabites, and mamzerim, but also foreigners and proselytes. Unlike Deuteronomy 23, which makes provision for entry of Ammonites and Moabites after the tenth generation, the ban here is total. (Loader 2009, 367)

Here is an example of the exclusionary list of banned people in the Rules of the Congregation 1Q28a Col. ii:3-10

No man, defiled by any of the impurities of a man, shall enter the assembly of these; and no-one who is defiled by these should be established in his office amongst the congregation: everyone who is defiled in his flesh, paralysed in his feet or in his hands, lame, blind, deaf, dumb or defiled in his flesh with a blemish visible to the eyes, or the tottering old man who cannot keep upright in the midst of the assembly; these shall not en[ter] to take their place [a]mong the congregation of the men of renown, for the angels of holiness are among their [congre]gation. And if [one of] these has something to say to the holy council, they shall question [him] in private, but the man shall [n]ot enter in the midst of [the congregation,] because [h]e is defiled. (Florentino and Tigchelaar 1997-1998, 103)

All Jews would know that there are just certain people who cannot ever be part of the congregation and allowed to enter the Temple. Even in the time of Jesus there was a sign in the Temple that warned gentiles to not proceed further under pain of death.

The Temple Warning Inscription

NOT ONE FOREIGNER IS TO ENTER INSIDE THE, AROUND THE SANCTUARY, BARRIER AND EMBANKMENT. HE WHO IS SEIZED, HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE IS FOR THE FOLLOWING DEATH PENALTY.

Deuteronomy 23:1–4

“No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD. No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD. No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.” (ESV)

For those living in the day of King Jesus, nothing will block the worshipper. Physical condition, nationality, nothing.

There is another reason for the reference to the eunuch other than as a pointer to the far future, it was also to point to the near future. An event is coming that the people will have to deal with.

Within 150 years, Judah will go into exile, and Isaiah had already provided insight as to what was going to happen to those who are direct descendants of King Hezekiah.

Isaiah 39:5–7

“Isaiah then said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of armies, ‘Behold, the days are coming when everything that is in your house, and what your fathers have stored up to this day, will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,’ says the LORD. ‘And some of your sons who will come from you, whom you will father, will be taken away, and **they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.**’ ”” (NASB 2020)

Some of those who became eunuchs in the service of Babylon, were incredibly faithful. One was a prophet.

Daniel 1:3–6

“The king commanded Ashpenaz, who was in charge of his court officials, to choose some of the Israelites who were of royal and noble descent—young men in whom there was no physical defect and who were handsome, well versed in all kinds of wisdom, well educated and having keen insight, and who were capable of entering the king’s royal service—and to teach them the literature and language of the Babylonians. So the king assigned them a daily ration from his royal delicacies and from the wine he himself drank. They were to be trained for the next three years. At the end of that time they were to enter the king’s service. As it turned out, **among these young men were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.**” (NET)

This is there because of what was coming up for some of those who the Lord would choose to use while in exile. Daniel and his friends may have been eunuchs. There is also the possibility that Nehemiah was a eunuch too.

Earlier, Isaiah said that a feast was coming, one in which all were invited to, and when we studied this in Isaiah 25, we learned that this feast is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. For clarity's sake, there is no limitation to the invite list, it is everyone, but some have already self-selected themselves out of contention, unbelievers. Here we see the impact of the invitation list.

Isaiah 25:6–7

“Now the LORD of armies will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, And refined, aged wine. And on this mountain He will destroy the covering which is over all peoples, The veil which is stretched over all nations.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus talked about this time and the upcoming feast when He was here the first time. He summarized, in Luke 14, the rejection of the Jews, to be followed by the subsequent turning to the Gentiles, the foreigners of our text. John covered it in Revelation as well.

Revelation 19:7–9

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”” (ESV)

The invitation list

- Old testament saints (Daniel 12:2) or as John the Baptist characterized it, “the friend of the bridegroom. The friends of the bridegroom are the Old Testament saints, and they will be the “many more” invited to the wedding feast.” (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 7)
- Tribulation saints
- Israel
- Sheep

Luke 13:29

“Then people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and take their places at the banquet table in the kingdom of God.” (NET)

This is “THE” feast to end all feasts. It not only kicks off the rule and reign of Messiah and at the same time also fulfills promises made to the Church, His bride.

Foreigners are not excluded, and eunuchs are not excluded. In other words, those things which used to be a barrier to belonging are no longer a barrier.

God offers everyone a place at his eternal banquet table, and all peoples will be represented. He serves nothing but the best. There is nothing here to disappoint, nothing the human heart doesn't relish. But the feast will be held "on this mountain," referring to Mount Zion (24:23). It does not belong to the city of man. God's people had to wait all their lives to sit at this table, but it was worth the wait. This is the banquet of true salvation. All the guests are happy, and nothing can ever make them sad again. (Ortlund, Jr. and Hughes 2005, 146)

Isaiah 56:4–5

"For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold firmly to My covenant, To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be eliminated." (NASB 2020)

After outlining those who used to be out but are now in, the Lord goes in reverse order providing details that would be shocking to a 6th Century BC Jew. He starts with the eunuch, physically altered or disabled yet is the one who is faithful.

They love what he loves, hate what he hates, want what he wants. They do not keep the Sabbaths because they must or they will be destroyed. They keep them because they are the Lord's Sabbaths. Their behavior is an expression of a relationship. This is what God longs for in his people, and if anyone will do this, their parentage or their body has nothing to do with their acceptability. (Oswalt 1998, 458)

For the Jew, it was important to have children to carry on the family line. But those who were eunuchs, no longer had that as an option. Their line would end and there would be no one to remember them after they died. But because of the Suffering Servant and the offer of mercy without cost, now, those who are faithfully following find themselves included no matter who they are. Remember the feast sees the "covering which is over all peoples" done away with forever. All peoples mean all peoples, even those which had previously been excluded.

Those who had been placed into the position of being childless are, to the shock of His people, to have a name that will never be cut off. The person who had no hope for a posterity will instead have an eternity with the King. That is foolishness to the religious Jew of 700BC. But considering what we have just studied about His mercy and grace, it is entirely characteristic.

Remembering those who have no hope for a posterity became important to Israel and remains so even today. This idea is what is behind the Yah Vashem (a hand and a name) museum and memorial in Jerusalem.

In an effort to find the "name and a face" of each of the six million Jews killed, of which 1.5 million were children, Yad Vashem maintains a vast repository of photos, testimonies, and a computer database about people who were killed in the Shoah. They are memorialized in the Hall of Names. (Eisenberg and Scolnic 2001, 186)

Allowing for the one who used to be excluded because of physical deformity or disability is a lesson learned by the nation and those who know Jesus.

The church deals with this today. Some say, "there is no possible way that God would ever use someone who has a physical or mental disability to glorify His name." They are passed over for ministry positions. Some want to serve but are refused the opportunity.

My uncle never grew mentally much beyond 16. He had physical challenges as well as mental...but he loved Jesus. He is part of the reason I am a believer today. He is whole now and with Jesus.

We are to be countercultural. Refer to verse one and the command to guard justice and righteousness. Paul nailed it.

1 Corinthians 1:20–25

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (ESV)

That may mean not only making sure that those with a disability are welcomed as part of the body, but also allowing them to serve as any faithful follower of Jesus Christ is allowed to serve. “God has bypassed the power centers of this world for those who are less self-important, less self-regarding. He shows His refusal to bargain with earthly power by revealing Himself to the powerless. They are most likely, in their helplessness, to welcome God on His own terms.” (Insight for Living 2007, 248)

God is indeed making all things new, but we still live in a fallen world.

Isaiah 56:5

“To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be eliminated.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus talked about this. He had to deal with bias even within His own group of followers. Even in speaking about children He reminded them “See that you do not disdain one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:10, NET)

The Lord then turns to the topic of foreigners. His people were to point them to the Lord, not follow their gods.

Isaiah 56:6–7

“Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To attend to His service and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, every one who keeps the Sabbath so as not to profane it, And holds firmly to My covenant; Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.” (NASB 2020)

As we have already seen, somewhere along the line everything switched from being a light to preventing the light. This carried over in the early church in a group called Judaizers.

There were some Jews who arrogantly believed in the idea of the chosen people. They could say the most terrible things: ‘God loves only Israel of all the nations he has made.’ ‘God will judge Israel with one measure and the Gentiles with another.’ ‘The best of the snakes crush; the best of the Gentiles kill.’ ‘God created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of Hell.’ This was the spirit which made the law lay it down that it was illegal to help a Gentile mother in giving birth, for that would only be to bring another Gentile into the world. When these particular Jews saw Paul bringing the gospel to the despised Gentiles, they were appalled and infuriated. (Barclay 2002, 5)

Verse 6 though says that not only are foreigners joining themselves to the Lord, but they are also serving in the temple and ministering to the Lord.

This is scandalous. A Jew would tell you only a Levite could serve in the Temple, yet here in Isaiah it clearly says foreigners will “attend to His service.” Verse 6 sounds a lot like Numbers 18:2 “And with you

bring your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may join you and minister to you while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony.” (ESV).

This makes it sound like that Gentiles will be joining themselves to the Lord in Temple service just as the Levites did. They love the name and as such “the foreigner’s joining himself to Jehovah to serve Him will be voluntary, proceeding from the inmost necessity of the heart.” (Lange, et al. 2008, 607)

Again, this holds to those who are faithfully following King Jesus and His law. This is only possible because of the work of the Suffering Servant and the ultimate fulfillment of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2:28 & 29. This takes us back to the latest offer of mercy.

Isaiah 55:1

“You there! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost.” (NASB 2020)

The foreigner and the those who are the outcasts of society have responded to the offer. Israel, foreigners, everyone who is faithfully loyal in the Kingdom have responded and are observing the Sabbaths and because of the Holy Spirit are demonstrating a lifestyle consistent with that of the King, guarding righteousness.

A promise is made by the Lord for them.

Isaiah 56:7–8

“Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.” The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “I will yet gather others to them, to those already gathered.”” (NASB 2020)

Jesus, as the Suffering Servant, was fully aware of the need to remove bars to the nations to come and worship and pray. He quoted this verse while cleansing the Temple.

Mark 11:15–18

“When they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the Temple and began to drive out all those who were buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the stools of those who sold pigeons, and he would not let anyone carry anything through the temple courtyards. He then taught the people: “It is written in the Scriptures that God said, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations.’ But you have turned it into a hideout for thieves!” The chief priests and the teachers of the Law heard of this, so they began looking for some way to kill Jesus. They were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.” (GNB)

God will make sure that the nations have access to the Temple, He will bring them Himself “just as he brought his own people back from the land of exile. There he will treat them just as he would any believing Israelite. They will have the privileges of having their sins atoned for (whole burnt offerings and sacrifices) and of having instant access to God in prayer.” (Oswalt 1998, 460)

Isaiah 56:8

“The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “I will yet gather others to them, to those already gathered.”” (NASB 2020)

We have already covered the fact that at the end of the age, God will regather all of His people from the end of the earth, they will not be the only ones though. This is a promise that the nations will be part of that. They will not be excluded from worship, they will not be excluded from the Temple. “For from the east to the west my name will be great among the nations. Incense and pure offerings will be offered in my name everywhere, for my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD who rules over all.” (Malachi 1:11, NET)

The theme in verse 8 is to depict YAHWEH as the one who gathers. He will gather all of the diaspora at the end of the age from Israel. Not one will be missed.

It has always been His intent to see as much of His creation experience salvation as possible. “First of all, then, I urge you to offer to God petitions, prayers, intercessions, and expressions of thanks for all people, for kings, and for everyone who has authority, so that we might lead a quiet and peaceful life with all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of **God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to know the truth fully.**” (1 Timothy 2:1–4, ISV)

Not only is there no ground for supposing that Gentiles who love Jehovah will be excluded from the congregation; but it is really Jehovah’s intention to gather some out of the heathen, and add them to the assembled diaspora of Israel. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 539)

Jesus made it clear for us that HE was seeking those who were lost to include the nations.

John 10:16

“I have other sheep that don’t belong to this fold. I must lead these also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock and one shepherd.” (ISV)

That is where the end of chapter 56 should be. There is a shift in theme that takes place with verse 9. The conversation shifts from those who are the remnant, from believers who have taken up the offer of mercy, to a discussion with those who will not be there at the end of the age.

He is now talking to those who are not part of the remnant. This is a conversation that will continue into chapter 57 as well.

The leadership of the nation, rather than leading the people, are more concerned about their own well-being. As an introduction to topic of leadership problems, we see the following.

Isaiah 56:9–12

“All you wild animals, All you animals in the forest, Come to eat. His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; And the dogs are greedy, they are never satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one to his unjust gain, without exception. “Come,” they say, “let’s get wine, and let’s drink heavily of intoxicating drink; And tomorrow will be like today, only more so.”” (NASB 2020)

The discussion begins with a theme that will be repeated in the scriptures, “Israel has prophets and shepherds, who are blind to every coming danger, and therefore fail to give warning of its approach, because they are sunken in selfishness and debauchery. It resembles a flock with a keeper, and therefore an easy prey (Ezek. 34:5); and the meaning of the appeal, which is certainly addressed to the nations of the world, the enemies of the people of God, is this: “Ye have only to draw near; ye can feed undisturbed, and devour as much as ye please.” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 540)

The wild animals are the surrounding nations that are, very soon, to come in take what they want to include sending Judah into captivity and exile. The reason is simple, “the watchmen are blind...”

Who are they? They are false prophets. The danger to Judah is a warning to us as well. Prophets and teachers should be warning of danger, of the need to repent and return to the Lord, but they do not. In our study of Ezekiel, we learned a bit about the duties of a watchman.

Ezekiel 33:1–6

“The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, speak to your people, and say to them, ‘Suppose I bring a sword against the land, and the people of the land take one man from their borders and make him their watchman. He sees the sword coming against the land, blows the trumpet, and warns the people,

but there is one who hears the sound of the trumpet yet does not heed the warning. Then the sword comes and sweeps him away. He will be responsible for his own death. He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, so he is responsible for himself. If he had heeded the warning, he would have saved his life. But suppose the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people. Then the sword comes and takes one of their lives. He is swept away for his iniquity, but I will hold the watchman accountable for that person's death.” (NET)

The watchman is a sentinel and everyone in Judah would know what this position and the responsibilities are. Every city had at least one, possibly many, watchmen.

The watchman would always have specific orders they are to follow. But here in Isaiah 56, they are “mute dogs unable to bark.” What good is it to have sheep dogs if they never bark and warn the flock? What good is it if the shepherd responsible for the flock is more interested in what is in it for them rather than what is best for the flock.

2 Peter 2:1–3

“But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.” (NLT)

We will pick up more on the problems with evil leadership next time.

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