

Isaiah 65-66 • Final Judgment and Glory of the Lord

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Isaiah chapter 65. You might remember here we are obviously, we're going through Isaiah on Wednesday night. The last time we studied Isaiah, we went through the last few chapters, and there was a very moving, a very passionate prayer that was given to us in those chapters that was being offered up by the people of Israel to the Lord.

And as we come to chapter 65, we find the response of the Lord is given to us in this chapter. And it's maybe not the response you would have expected, because it kind of highlights the insincerity of the people who were praying.

You and I just can't tell that sort of thing. When people pray, we just kind of figure, hey, they're praying, wonderful. God always sees the heart. That's one thing that we forget about way too often, that God sees the heart.

So many people ask me questions. Is it okay to do this? Is it okay to do that? This is kind of a gray area. What do you think? What is the..., you know what I mean? And I keep bringing it back and saying, hey, it's all about the heart. It's all about the heart.

God sees the heart and many times it's not about what you do, it's about what the heart is behind what you do. In this sort of a response that the Lord gives, He's going to confront the insincerity of the people who were praying and their natural rebellious nature.

But He's also going to go on to speak of those few among the Israelites who had made a determination to follow the Lord with all of their heart. And He's going to talk about the promises that He has to them.

Verse 1 of chapter 65 says, *"I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me;..."*

Before I read any further, if you're the kind of person that likes to read different translations of the Bible and even compare them side by side, which we have the capability of doing incredibly easily today. Because they're all available

online and you can create parallel Bible things. I remember back in the day, we used to have to buy a parallel Bible. Remember those? It had like 4 columns with different translations and they were expensive, and they were enormous. You could get a hernia carrying one of those puppies around.

Well, now it's just all, you can do it on your phone, you can flip between translations. I don't know how I got into all that. Anyway, if you're the kind of person that likes to do that, and you read verse 1 of chapter 65, you'd notice that this is a challenging verse to translate. Let me put up a comparison up on the screen.

ESV: *"I was ready to be sought..."*

NASB: *"I permitted myself to be sought..."*

NKJV: *"I was sought..."*

NIV: *"I revealed myself to those..."*

The ESV, as you'll remember, was, *"I was ready to be sought..."* But the New American Standard Bible says, *"I permitted myself to be sought..."* The New King James says, *"I was sought..."* And the NIV says, *"I revealed myself to those..."* and kind of departed from the others altogether.

And what that means is, when you see that happen in the Bible, that means that was a very challenging phrase in the Hebrew for the translators, and they did their best. And yet they came up with some different sort of ways of approaching it.

If you read through that verse in all of those translations, the essence of it remains the same in all of them. And what it is, God confronting the nation of Israel with their failure to seek Him and their unwillingness to hear His Word and respond to it.

Let's read the whole verse. *"I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that was not called by my name."* (ESV)

He says, verse 2, *"I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, (because why? They're) following their own devices;"* That sounds like our world today, doesn't it? People follow their own devices. They do what they think is right. Hey, if it's right to me, man, it's right. If you don't like it, yeah, tough but it's right to me. Well, the Bible

condemns that kind of an attitude. It says here that these people were doing that which is not good, they were following their own devices.

And *“a people (He says in verse 3) who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks;”* He's talking about pagan religious practices, okay, that the Jews were doing.

“⁴ who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat pig's flesh, ...” You and I would say they're having pork. And for you and I, the food laws don't apply to us in the New Testament. But in the Old Covenant, the pig was an unclean animal. They were not to eat it and yet the Jews were just ignoring the Mosaic law.

He says, *“...and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels; ⁵ who say, “Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you.”*

They're doing all this wrong, and yet they have this attitude, with their nose up in the air, like, you're not good enough to even be around me. They, in other words, they were blinded by their pride. And by the way, spiritual pride, I think is the worst kind of pride there is, personally.

Other kinds of pride, it seems, can, I don't know, a little bit more easily be broken, but spiritual pride, wow!. When somebody is spiritually proud. But I think it's a terrible thing in the eyes of the Lord.

Look what He goes on to say at the end of verse 5. *“...These are a smoke in my nostrils, ...”* Have you ever had to smoke when you're like standing next to a fire? You're burning something and you just kind of take a breath and that smoke gets up and it burns, it burns up in your nostrils.

And He says, that's what it's like. This kind of spiritual pride that goes along with people who are living lives of just total sin, it's like smoke in the nostrils. It's not to say that God, the Father has nostrils. It's not it's using an anthropomorphism, which as you probably know is a human related, physical, corporeal related example to help you and I understand just simply how He feels about something. He's using something that you and I can relate to, okay.

And He says it's, *“...a fire that burns all the day. ⁶ Behold, it is written before me: “I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their lap ⁷ both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together, says the LORD; because they made offerings on the mountains and insulted me on the hills, (and*

again, that refers to pagan worship practices. He says,) *I will measure into their lap payment for their former deeds.*”

⁸ *Thus says the LORD: “As the new wine is found in the cluster, and they say, ‘Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,’ so I will do for my servants’ sake, and not destroy them all.”*

All right, let me explain what that's all about. You can see there's mercy in the midst of some of these hard words of judgment but you know we started off the chapter by God saying, you know my arms have been open to you guys. My hands have been open, I want to welcome you but you're you've been rebellious and you've been spiritually proud and it's just it's an abomination to me.

And yet He says, but just as people say, *“the new wine is found in the cluster,”* and don't destroy it because there's a blessing in it.” In other words, there are some good grapes in the cluster, so don't throw away the cluster of grapes for the sake of the good grapes. That's what He's saying, in essence, in that section. And therefore, the response is, so I'm not going to destroy them all, okay.

And He's talking about the faithful remnant here because there's always a faithful remnant of people.

And He says in verse 9, *“I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and from Judah possessors of my mountains; my chosen shall possess it, and my servants shall dwell there.”*

What He's saying is, even though I'm going to take those who rebel against me and kick them out of the land, the faithful will stay in the land. I will allow them to stay in the land. And again, these are all promises and curses related to the Mosaic Covenant.

Remember when God made a covenant with his people, He said, if you will keep my law. And remember, this is with Israel, not the church. Let's get that straight. He said to them, if you keep my law, I will bless you in the land and you'll stay in the land, and no one will threaten you in the land. However, if you rebel against me, and refuse to worship me, you will actually be ejected from the land. Simple as that.

And yet God says here, even though this is going to happen, yet to the faithful, I will allow them to stay in the land.

He says in verse 10, *“Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me.”* That's critical right there. It's going to be those things for the people who have sought Him, okay.

“But (verse 11) you who forsake the Lord, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny,” I'll explain what those mean in just a moment.

“¹² I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter, because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my eyes and chose what I did not delight in.”

You can see that God is using kind of a word play on the fact that they had been setting a table for Fortune, and they had been mixing wine for Destiny. And those are the names of pagan gods. And it's basically just saying, for those of you who have sought pagan gods, because Fortune and Destiny are words that literally inhabited pagan worship, but they meant the same thing they kind of do today. The people believed that by worshiping these pagan gods, they would somehow bring fortune and determine their destiny to be a positive one.

Notice what He says. Because you have sought to do that, you've sought to increase your fortune through pagan idolatry, and you've sought to improve your destiny through pagan idolatry, what I'm going to do, is I'm going to destine you for the sword.

Verse 13. *“Therefore thus says the LORD God: “Behold, my servants shall eat, (but notice all of the contrast in these verses) but you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame;*

¹⁴ behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart and shall wail for breaking of spirit. ¹⁵ You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the LORD God will put you to death, but his servants he will call by another name, ¹⁶ so that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my eyes.”

You see these contrasts going back and forth as the Lord says, this is the way it's going to be for the people who seek my face and those who reject me, and

those who go their own way, and live lives of just sinful indulgence, sacrificing their children in the fire. Engaging in all kinds of immoral sexual activity through these pagan idolatry and the practices that go along with it, this is what's going to come.

Now, as we get into the final verses of this chapter, you'll notice that the tone changes fairly drastically here. The previous remarks about blessing that He just got done talking about. How He's going to bring blessing to those who are faithful, now moves the Lord to go on to speak of the fulfillment of blessings that's going to come in the future.

I want to just let you know before we get into reading verses 17 and onward that what we're going to be looking at prophetically is yet unfulfilled.

There's much of the Old Testament that is yet to come in terms of its prophetic fulfillment and this is one of those sections so, it's important to pay attention, because this is still upcoming.

Verse 17, *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.”*

Now, there's a couple of things we need to make a point about, just from verse 17. What He is talking about here, about the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, is what we read about in the New Testament Book of Revelation.

And the Bible very clearly says that God is going to destroy the old heaven and the old earth, and He will create a new heaven and a new earth, but this is going to happen at the end of what we call the Millennial Kingdom.

Remember, here's the order of events.

The next thing that's going to happen on God's prophetic timetable is the catching away of the church; Jesus is going to come for His church.

After that, the world is going to be plunged into a 7-year tribulation period.

Following the tribulation period, there's going to be a great battle called the Battle of Armageddon, when the Lord returns to this earth and fights on behalf of Israel, and the assembled nations that come to destroy her.

And then right after that battle, Jesus takes His throne on Mount Zion in Jerusalem and ushers in a 1,000 year period of unparalleled peace and prosperity we call, the Millennial Kingdom. Millennial for 1,000.

After the Millennial Period, that 1,000 year period of time, the Bible says that Satan, who during the millennium has been put away for that 1,000 year period of time in the abyss, is going to be released for a very short time of rebellion against the Lord that will be quickly put down.

And then there is going to be a final judgment and we will enter into a period of time that we refer to as, the eternal state. And that is when the new heaven and the new earth will be created, okay. Keep all that straight because there will be a test. Alright.

He's talking here in verse 17 about the eternal state and He simply says, “*For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, ...*” There's a new heaven and a new earth coming.

He says, and here's another interesting point in that verse. He says, “*...the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.*”

I've had people ask me before, how are we going to feel about all the things from the past? I mean, all of our hurts, all of our pains, all of our sorrows, well, it says right here that they're not going to be remembered. We're going to move forward into that time of the eternal state.

Now, I need to tell you that some commentators believe that the next 2 verses; 18 and 19, also continue speaking about the eternal state.

But, I think the inclusion of the word, “*But...*” in verse 18 signals, in fact, a shift in time. And what's going to happen here now, is the Lord is going to go back in time. He is going to literally go back a 1,000 years between verse 17 and 18 and following. Now He's going to go back and talk about the Millennial Kingdom.

Don't think that God cares about putting things in chronological order in the Bible. If you think that you're going to be confused. If you read things like okay He's talking here in verse 17 about this new heaven and new earth and then He's talking in verse 18 about things that are going on the earth.

And He's going to talk here about people dying, which will happen during the Millennial Kingdom, but it won't happen during the eternal state, okay. You're

going to be confused if you think that there's some kind of chronological order to what He's saying.

Prophetically, God just..., He speaks about things in groups and clusters, and He doesn't necessarily put things in any kind of... I shared them with you just in chronological order. He doesn't necessarily care to do that so you have to pay attention and know what these different states are going to include. Alright? And as we read on, you're going to see why these verses apply to the Millennial Kingdom. Alright?

Verse 18, *"But (He says) be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness."* And that is going to be the case for Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom. She's going to be a joy and a gladness to all the earth during that time.

He says in verse 19, *"I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. ²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed."*

Alright, stop there. This is how we know that in these verses He is referring to the Millennial Kingdom because He's talking about people dying. And you need to know that there will be those on the earth during the Millennial Kingdom who will still be mortal, okay? And they will have a lifespan that will be greatly extended.

It says here that if somebody dies at the age of 100, he's going to be considered accursed. Today, if somebody reaches a hundred, we're like, whoa!, wow!, that's amazing. But it's not going to be amazing during the Millennial Kingdom. People are going to have their lifespans greatly increased. But they will live and they will die.

But the period after the Millennial Kingdom, when heaven and earth is remade that we were talking about, that eternal state, that's when God is going to eliminate death altogether. There isn't going to be a reference to death during the eternal state so that distinguishes it.

And any of the language we read in the Bible, when it talks about any death going on there, we know that we're not dealing with the eternal state. Because at that point, God is going to completely obliterate death. Alright?

Now, in the next verses, He's going to speak of some of the social changes that happen during the Millennial Kingdom. *"²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree (look at this) shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands."*

There's some trees in Israel that are hundreds and hundreds of years old and He says, as the life of a tree, so shall be my people during that time. But you'll notice that this will be contrasted with life on earth today where people plant vineyards and somebody else comes and takes it or they build a house and somebody else lives in it because they get conquered. People just run all over them.

He says that's not going to happen during the Millennial Kingdom. There's going to be peace. There's going to be security. There's going to be safety. And you'll notice that verse 22 ends with that statement, *"and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands."* And I want you to know that reference to, the chosen of God, is Israel. Okay.

Verse 23. *"They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them."*

Now we're going to read about some of the spiritual changes going on during the Millennial Kingdom. Verse 24, *"Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear."*

Pastor Paul, why do my prayers take so long to be answered? It's just, it's the kingdom, it's the dispensation, it's the time frame we're living in. It's just a different, it's a different time frame. It's a challenging time frame. It's one where we live by faith. We're called to live by faith.

It's going to be different during the Millennial Kingdom. Jesus is going to be with us. Many of the promises that have been made to us over the years will be realized at that time and we won't be living as much nearly by faith. We'll be living by sight, but today we live by faith.

And the life of faith is a challenging one, I'll grant you. Very challenging. So sometimes the answer to that question is, pastor Paul, why aren't, why don't my prayers just get answered just like that? Because God wants to grow your faith. We don't usually think about that. We don't usually factor that in. Gee, I think

God's testing my faith. How am I doing? Oh, I think I just got an F. Just failed that quiz.

Notice what the spiritual aspect though is going to be. He says, before they even call, I'm going to answer them. And yet while they're still speaking, I will hear.

Now check out the changes in verse 25 to the ecology of the earth. *"The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox,..."* Isn't that going to be weird? Do you know, you see what's going on? Carnivorous animals are not... Well, animals that are carnivorous now are going to be herbivorous in the Millennial Kingdom because they're not going to be killing. Animals aren't going to feed off one another.

It says, *"...and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.* Isn't that cool? *"The wolf and the lamb shall graze together."* The wolf and the lamb. In one of the versions, I think it's the New King James, it says, the wolf and the lamb will lie down together.

And I heard somebody saying that actually that happens today. They, the wolf and the lamb lie down together, but only one of them gets up afterwards. But, one of the, one of the big questions that I get when we, whenever we talk about the Millennial Kingdom, because it can be confusing. The question that most often comes up is where are we going to be? Where's the church going to be?

Where's the bride of Christ? Where are we going to be during the Millennial Kingdom? Well, we're going to be right where a bride ought to be, and that is alongside her husband. And the Bible says that we are going to be reigning alongside Him during that time.

Keep in mind that we will already have received our resurrection bodies. Because when the church is caught up to be with the Lord, when He comes for His church. The Bible says, *"the dead in Christ,"* and that means those Christians whose bodies have been laid to rest, those will rise first. They're with the Lord.

And this is another issue that really messes people up. Had a conversation with a guy this week about it, all week. And he was just really confused about the whole issue of why does the Bible talk about, the fact that we're going to be raised one day, and yet you keep saying, pastor Paul, that when we die, we immediately go into the presence of the Lord. Why do you say that? How can you say that we're going to go and be in the presence of the Lord, and then our

bodies are going to be raised. That we're going to be, that we're going to have a resurrection? How can you have a resurrection when you're already with the Lord?

And what people forget is that you are made up of 3 parts. You are body, soul, and spirit. And when you die, your soul and spirit will be released. That which inhabits your body now will be released. But that part of you doesn't die. That part of you can't die. Alright? So, you're going to go and be with the Lord. The essence of who you are is going to be with the Lord upon death.

Your body is going to die and it's going to stay dead until the resurrection. And any reference to resurrection is always about the body, not the soul and the spirit. Your soul and spirit don't get raised, your body gets raised, okay? When it says, the dead in Christ will rise first, that doesn't mean they were sleeping in the ground.

That means..., they're with the Lord but their new bodies are going to be raised first. And then we who are left at the coming of the Lord will just simply be transformed in the twinkling of an eye? Isn't that a trippy thought?

I mean if you can imagine. Can imagine being alive on the earth when the Lord comes and you're like dealing with all these aches and pains and all of a sudden it just, it's gone. And you have this brand new body that doesn't have any of that stuff. How cool is that going to be?

Where are we going to be during the Millennial Kingdom? We're going to be with the Lord. And we're going to be kind of dual citizens, I think probably on earth and in heaven. And I don't know what the Lord's all going to have us doing exactly. I don't know. But it'll be cool.

The other question that comes up is then, well, then who is it that populates the earth during the Millennial Kingdom? And who are the people who are going to live and die during that time? Well, it's those people who were not taken in the Rapture. It is those people who survived the Great Tribulation, and that's going to be a toughie, cause we know that a lot of people are going to perish in the Great Tribulation.

And it's those who are going to survive the judgment of the sheep and the goats. The sheep and the goats is a judgment that takes place after the Tribulation Period. And it's not something you and I are going to be involved in, okay? You are not going to be separated as a sheep. Your destiny will already be

determined. You'll be with the Lord, you'll have your new body so, we've got those sorts of things going on.

Here's what's really kind of trippy. It is possible that there are people living on the earth today who will populate the Millennial Kingdom? I want you just to think about that for a minute. It's possible that people living right now will populate the earth in the Millennial Kingdom. I mean, all they got to do is...

Well, think of it this way. If Jesus came tonight for his church, and I pray He does. If He came tonight for the church, then the next 7 years would be that period of time called the Great Tribulation and at the end of that 7 year period, we go into the Millennial Kingdom.

So if the Lord came tonight, the Millennial Kingdom would start just 7 years down the road. Weird, huh? I know, we always kind of think about these things as kind of like way off in the future, we don't know. No man knows the day or the hour. We're not sure when the Lord's coming back for His church.

But when you think about it, it's pretty crazy that, all they got to do is survive the Great Tribulation and they're in. That's it, no problem, so there you go. Alright.

Isaiah 66, final chapter. It's kind of interesting how it ends here and you'll see that it kind of ends a little bit the way it began.

It says, *“Thus says the LORD: (verse 1) “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? ² All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”*

Stop there. I need you to look at these verses with me because they're very important. This passage, when I read it always reminds me of king David. Because you remember king David was a man, who shortly after taking the throne of Israel wanted very much to build the temple. He wanted to build the house of the Lord.

In fact he had Nathan over and told him, the prophet Nathan, about the fact that he wanted to build the house of the Lord. And Nathan was all like, yeah, go for it. And then left David's palace and started heading home. And the Lord caught him halfway home and said turn right around and go back and tell David I got a message for him.

And that message was basically, you're not the one to build my house. But while we're on the subject, He said, I'll build you a house. And of course, that was a wonderful prophetic promise about the fact that the house of David would be the one through which would come the promised Messiah and all that. But the Lord..., whenever people wanted to build a house for God, God would always remind them, just keep in mind, there's nothing you can build that can possibly contain me. I own it all anyway. I'm bigger than all of it. And there's really nothing that you can do. And that's kind of what he's saying in these verses.

"Heaven is my throne." Good grief. This earth that you think is all so cool, that's my footstool. And He says, *"all these things my hands have made,"* and if that doesn't kind of put you off to God a little bit, you kind of wonder, well then what can I give God that He doesn't already have? Well, the answer is nothing.

There's nothing you can give God that He doesn't already have in that sense. If you're trying to impress God with the grandeur of your service, or your gifts, or something like that, just keep it.

Let me tell you though, what He says is important to Him. What is important to him? The man who is humble, the man who is contrite in spirit. And you know that word in the Hebrew literally means, lame in spirit. Isn't that weird? Like crippled. And who trembles at my Word. Wow!.

What does that mean exactly? Do we tremble at His Word? When we hear the Word of God, what that really means is, I believe it. I don't sit and argue about it. I don't say, oh well, and try to explain it away or justify my own actions by saying, well that's really not what He meant.

I see the Word of God, I recognize it as the Word of God, and I accept it as the Word of God, and I say, yeah that's God's Word. You better pay attention. That's what He's talking about. And you know what? That's the person who gets God's attention.

You want to get God's attention, walk in humility, walk in contrition and tremble at His Word. There you go. There it is right there.

Now He goes on to speak of those who involve themselves in empty ritualism without a true heart condition of contrition, humility, and the trembling of the Word.

Look at this in verse 3. *"He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who*

presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol.” Why? Why is that such a issue with God? He says, “...These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations;”

What are they doing? This is talking about Jews at that time, who were involved in all of the things that they were told to do under the Mosaic Covenant. These sacrifices, grain offerings, and all these other things, they were told to do.

And yet, because their heart condition is the opposite of what God described here. There's no humility, there's no contrition, and they do not tremble at God's Word. Therefore, they bring an offering, and it's like somebody who murders someone.

They offer this, it's like a grain offering, and it's like they're offering pig's blood. And remember, a pig was an unclean animal. So you would never offer a pig, let alone use its blood. Absolutely not. That would defile the whole altar.

The point is, God says, this is how I see it, when someone's heart is not right. And this is one of those passages, again, that reminds you and I, it's all about the heart. Stop fussing and stressing and obsessing about the little things you do and find out about where your heart is at.

That's what God cares about. Seek me and know me, David said. Search me, Lord. Search my heart, see if there be any wicked way in me. And then lead me in the way everlasting. That was David's prayer, it was a bold prayer. (Psalms 139:23-24)

But it was a prayer that said don't look at how long I read my Bible every day. Don't even look at how long I pray. Don't look at how many times I come to church in a given month because you can do those things with the wrong attitude.

None of those things are bad, but you can do them with the wrong attitude. And they won't get you anywhere with God. He sees the heart. Always the heart. You can't hide. You can't hide from God. He looks into your heart like you and I look through a pane of glass, and we see it completely on the other side. This is what the Lord is saying.

Verse 4, He says, *“I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; (see, they didn't tremble at His Word) but they did what was evil*

in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.” They did the things they delighted in, but not what the Lord delighted in.

Verse 5. *Hear (He says) the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: “Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, ‘Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy’; but it is they who shall be put to shame.”*

These people that are involved in this empty ritualism, they're just, they're religionists. You know what a religionist is? It's somebody who's just into religion, but they're not really into God. They're involved in all kinds of religious practices and yet, they're not into God. And when they do things against God's people, they do it in the name of the Lord.

They really truly believe that God wants them to do those things, like persecute you, make you look ridiculous, or whatever the persecution may be. He says, but you know what, it's they who are going to be put to shame.

He says in verse 6, *“The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense (and that word means, fully repaid) to his enemies!”*

Verse 7, *“Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.”*⁸ *Who has heard such a thing?*” Yeah, every woman prays about this, but no one's heard of it. It's a painless birth. It doesn't happen. Birth is painful regardless, and the Lord asked the question, *“Who has heard of such a thing?”*

*“... Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.”*⁹ *Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?” says the LORD; “shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?” says your God.”*”

In other words, shall I who created the whole birthing process then stop it at the very end. No, of course not.

Now He's talking about what He's bringing about for the nation of Israel. Nation of Israel was born in a moment. Born miraculously by the choosing of Abraham. And the promises that God made to Abraham that were passed along to his son Isaac.

And then Isaac and his wife had twin boys: Jacob and Esau. And the promises that were given originally to Abraham were also passed on to Jacob. And Jacob was renamed Israel and to all of his descendants came the promises that God gave to Abraham. But there was literally a nation born overnight. A people of God born overnight and God says, do I start the birthing process just to stop it at the end so that there's no baby at the end? Of course not.

And God is going to bring about the final work of redemption, the final plan that He has for Israel.

He says in verse 10, no, He says, *“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; ¹¹ that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance.”*

And this is, again, speaking of Israel, specifically Jerusalem, which is kind of the quintessential city of Israel. This is speaking of Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom.

And it's saying that Jerusalem is going to be the blessing of the whole world during the Millennial Kingdom. Nations are going to flood into Jerusalem. Kings are going to come to Jerusalem to speak with Jesus, to listen to Him, to receive from Him. People are going to come from all over the world to Jerusalem and Jerusalem is going to pour forth blessing.

But see, that's the birth that God originally intended for Israel, but it never came about. Because Israel, as we're told in other prophetic books, gave birth to wind. He says you were in labor, but you gave birth to wind. Can you imagine being in labor and then wind. What a waste, right? All that pushing and crying and groaning and stuff and, yeah. The picture is kind of a crazy one, is it not?

What God is saying is, I'm going to bring this all about. I am going to accomplish this, what you could not accomplish, I will accomplish. And the people who love..., did you notice that He said that?

Verse 10 again. *“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy,...”* Even those of you who mourn over her, and that means you mourn over her present condition. Rejoice because she is going to be the blessing of the world.

Do you know, I am pretty sure that most unbelievers are completely bewildered as to why we feel the way we do about Israel. But you cannot study the Bible,

and particularly the Old Testament, you cannot study the Bible and really take what it says into your heart without coming away with a love for Israel. I believe that with all my heart. Years ago, we used to have a table sitting back here. We don't, I mean, or obviously, but we had a cross on it and we had a menorah. Do you guys remember those days? Well, some of those videos still exist because I've got videos on YouTube that are like 12 years old.

And I still get notes from people wanting to know why there's a menorah on the table. They're confused by it. And of course, we always had a menorah on the table alongside a cross to show the connection between Judaism and Christianity, that Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism. That it is not a different, it's not a different expression or faith. It's the continuation, it's the fulfillment of. That's why the Old Testament goes with the New Testament. We don't cut it off and say, well, that was then. Good grief, we're reading about things that haven't yet happened here in the Old Testament. So it comes together, it goes together.

But the point is, when we see Israel declared and mentioned, even though God has so many negative things to say about the people of Israel in terms of their faithfulness, which was usually the opposite of that, we cannot help but come away with a love for Israel that I believe is birthed by the Holy Spirit who is in our hearts. Who is striving for the people of Israel and interceding for the people of Israel, and one day will powerfully move on behalf of Israel in the latter days. And it's just one of those things that you can't explain to somebody.

It's like, what are you guys all up about Israel for? I mean, why is Israel such a big... It's this little sliver of a country and there's several nations in the world that would really just as soon it got wiped off the map. In fact, some of them even have declared intentions to do that very thing.

What's your big deal with Israel? Why Israel? I mean, good grief. Why not pick some other big, prosperous, wonderful nation? Why Israel? Well, it's where the center of historical prophetic redemption is going to take place.

Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, came out of Israel, was born to an Israelite woman, was raised in Jewish culture, and is of the lineage of David.

You want to know what's happening in the world? You want to know what's happening prophetically? You want to keep your eye on what's happening in prophetic scripture? Keep your eye on Israel. It's all centers around Israel. Every bit of it.

He talks here about those who love her. And I believe that refers to the church today. Verse 12. *“For thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees.”* Isn't that interesting? *“¹³ As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”*

God does this every once in a while in the Word of God. He uses that language of similarity or likeness to describe for you and I something that's going to happen. And here He describes the comfort that is going to be poured out to the nations of the world through Israel. God's going to comfort Israel, then they're going to in turn comfort the nations of the world. But notice how He likens the comfort that is going to be extended to the peoples of the world. He says, it is going to be *“as one whom his mother comforts.”*

Isn't that interesting? It's funny, I grew up in a home where I knew both my mom and dad loved me. And yet, when I fell down or got scared or something like that, I ran to my mom. And I saw my own kids do the same thing. My kids they, I think they kind of liked me but they would run to their mom, when they got hurt.

And it's just kind of the way it goes. Mom is that picture of comfort and that's why the Lord uses it here. *“As of a mother who comfort, so I will comfort...”* It's a beautiful picture.

Verse 14, *“You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; ...”* And that may very well speak of a health that comes upon the world, and that might attribute to some of those long life spans.

“...and the hand of the Lord shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies. “For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶ For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.”

This is talking about that Battle of Armageddon when the nations of the world gather against Israel at the conclusion of the tribulation, the Lord returns to the earth to fight for Israel on her behalf. And that's what that is talking about there in verses 15 and 16.

Verse 17. *“Those who sanctify and purify themselves* (in other words, those who set themselves apart for the Lord and those who live that life of purity

themselves) to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig's flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the LORD. ¹⁸ “For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, ¹⁹ and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.

²⁰ And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. ²¹ And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.”

What God is saying here is, He's foretelling a time when the peoples of the world will return Jews back to their homeland. That'll be one of the blessings during the Millennial Kingdom. The nations will find out what Jews are living in their land and they will bring them, they will escort them back to their homeland in this regathering in the land of promise.

And then He ends this way. “²² For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. ²³ From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.

Notice these time references, “new moon to new moon, ...Sabbath to Sabbath.” He's simply referring to, speaking to a Jewish audience to understand the passage of time, “new moon to new moon, ... Sabbath to Sabbath.” This simply is a way of saying, it's in an ongoing way. He says all people, He says all flesh, all people on the earth will come before me to worship.

And it's really interesting that the Book of Isaiah gets ready to end this way because mostly of how it began. I don't know if you remember back in chapter 1 of Isaiah, but God talked about kind of the opposite. Let me show you this on the screen. This is really interesting from Isaiah chapter 1, 12 and 14. Remember He asked the question,

Isaiah 1:12-14

“When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot

endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them."

"When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? (He says) Bring no more vain (and that means empty) offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them."

And again, these were things that God had told the Israelites to do, but because they were doing it with iniquity in their hearts, it was unbearable to the Lord.

But then notice how the Book of Isaiah ends. Once again in verse 22 and 23, or actually 23.

Now He says, *"From new moon to new moon, ... from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh (is going to) ... come (and there's going to be a true and a genuine worship) (of not just the Jews, but all people. All people of the earth will) shall come to worship"* the Lord in truth and sincerity. But Isaiah ends with a promise that all this, all that is going to change, and I love that.

Then we have the last verse. ²⁴ *"And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. (and that's following the Battle of Armageddon) For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."*

The Book of Isaiah, interestingly enough, begins and ends with the condemnation of those who have rebelled. against the Lord, which is kind of a bummer.

But the good news is, God has made a way of escape and that way of escape, of course, is for all who put their confidence and faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Even though the Bible talks about condemnation, even though the Bible talks about judgment, you and I can be confident and know that for us, judgment is past. Because we've put our faith in Jesus and what He did.

The judgment of God fell upon Jesus on the cross. He did it for you, and He did it for me and now the judgment of the Lord is no longer an issue for you and I.

Condemnation is no longer an issue for you and me because we're putting our faith in what happened on the cross when Jesus died for us.