

ARE SHORT OF THE MARK.

I SAY TO YOU IN THE WORDS OF EDWARD JOHN CARNELL:

"IF IT IS TRUE THAT JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS TO SAVE SINNERS, HAVE WE ANY RIGHT TO SAY THAT WE LOVE SINNERS IF WE FAIL TO CONFRONT THEM WITH THIS TRUTH? AND WHERE CAN WE FIND A DIVINELY VALIDATED ACCOUNT OF THIS TRUTH APART FROM SCRIPTURE? IN SUM, WE CAN EXPRESS NO HIGHER LOVE TO LOST HUMANITY THAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN THE PRECISE FORM IN WHICH GOD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO REVEAL IT!"

C. WORLDWIDE IS THE INVITATION TO COVENANT RELATIONSHIP, CHAPTER 56

1. DISTINCTIONS DESTROYED

TEXT: 56:1-5

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.
- 2 Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that holdeth it fast; that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.
- 3 Neither let the foreigner, that hath joined himself to Jehovah, speak, saying, Jehovah will surely separate me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.
- 4 For thus saith Jehovah of the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant:
- 5 Unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

QUERIES

- a. Why single out the sabbath as a mark of righteousness?
- b. How could a foreigner join himself to Jehovah?
- c. Why would a eunuch be worried that he was a "dry tree"?

PARAPHRASE

This is what the Lord says, I am soon going to establish My covenant of salvation by grace through the Suffering Servant. It is your responsibility to enter into My covenant by doing justice and righteousness. Blessedness for all men shall be found in keeping My covenant according to My terms. All the former distinctions that hindered foreigners and eunuchs from full covenant relationship will be abrogated when My salvation through the Servant becomes a reality. So the Lord says, Let the foreigners and eunuchs be faithful in keeping My covenant terms out of a heart that chooses to do so, and I will give them a relationship to Me of much more value than any earthly blessing or reputation; I will give them an eternal reputation of blessedness.

COMMENTS

v. 1-2 COVENANT ESPOUSED: On the basis of the Suffering Servant's atonement and the offer of a new covenant relationship through His accomplishment, the emphasis is now put on man's espousal or choice of that covenant. Jehovah's salvation is "near"! In His salvation, His righteousness will be revealed (cf. Rom. 1:17; 3:21-26). Logically, then, those who choose the benefits of His righteousness must accept the responsibility of such a choice which is to *do* righteously. Those who want the results of righteousness must practice righteousness! Practicing righteousness can be *clearly defined!* Doing what God's revealed covenant terms say is right and refraining

from what God's covenant says is evil is practicing righteousness. The apostle John amplifies this principle in his writings (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; I Jn. 2:3-6; 2:24; 3:19-24; 4:6; 5:1-3, etc.). In our text here, Isaiah uses the "sabbath" as an example of man's obligation to keep God's covenant according to God's terms. Next to circumcision, the sabbath was the central sign of the covenant (cf. Ex. 31:13ff; Ezek. 20:12ff). This does not mean the sabbath day was to be a commandment of the New Covenant which the Messiah would establish. *Sabbath* is used in a number of messianic prophecies to exemplify the prediction that members of the future messianic kingdom would be covenant-keepers instead of covenant-breakers like the Jews of the days of the prophets (cf. Isa. 66:22-23; Ezek. 44:24; 45:17; 46:3). Sabbath-day keeping in the New Covenant dispensation is definitely abrogated as a law of God since the O.T. ordinances were "nailed" to the cross (cf. Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 9:10; 10:1, etc.). Sabbath-keeping is, at best, merely a matter of opinion in the New Dispensation (cf. Rom. 14:1-12; Col. 2:16-23). The use of the sabbath by Isaiah in this messianic text is a clear example of "times-coloring" in prophetic literature. How is a prophet 700 years removed from the messianic age to communicate the idea of sincere covenant-keeping to his audience? He must do it in terminology and practices contemporary with his own dispensation and age. Therefore, he idealizes the concept of covenant-keeping with one's sincerity in keeping the sabbath!

v. 3-5 CONTEMPTIBLE EXALTED: Foreigners (*nakerily*, Heb.) and sojourners (*ger*, Heb.) might become citizens and members of the covenant people but they were prohibited from participating in full fellowship with the people of the land (cf. Ex. 12:43-49; Lev. 16:29; 17:12; 18:26; 22:10; 25:35; 25:40; Num. 15:15; 16:29; 19:10; 35:15, etc.). Eunuchs were also barred from the temple of God (Deut. 23:1). Naturally, when they heard Isaiah's magnificent predictions of the glorious messianic age to come they would assume "second class citizenship" to be their lot in that age also. Taking the case of the eunuchs first the Lord says they shall have an inheritance in the messianic

kingdom in spite of the fact that they could produce no progeny. In the Jewish mind messianic inheritance was tied directly to the land and tribal inheritances. If a man could produce no offspring he had no hope in the messianic future. But there will be no such limitations or hindrances to full favor in the messianic age. If men will keep God's covenant in the new dispensation and *choose* what pleases the Lord, they will be brought into God's house in full fellowship. Outward observance is not sufficient (Mt. 5:17—6:18; Jn. 4:21-24; Mt. 15:1-19), the new covenant will be written on the *heart* (Jer. 31:31-34). In the messianic kingdom there will be no distinctions as to race, physical perfection, economic or educational status (cf. Gal. 3:23-29). All will be full-fledged sons of the covenant, descendants of Abraham according to faith, heirs of the promises of God (Eph. 2:11-22, Rom. 8:12-17, etc.). We have a specific example of the fulfillment of this in the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Here is one eunuch indeed who has a name that is far more honored than it could have ever been by a long line of illustrious descendants. The primary reason for restrictions about sojourners and eunuchs in the O.T. was ceremonial uncleanness. But those who shall choose the covenant terms of the Messiah and keep them shall be cleansed of all defilement (ceremonial and moral) (cf. Zech. 12:10—14:21; Mal. 3:1-6; etc.).

QUIZ

1. What salvation is predicted as "near"?
2. Why the exhortation to keep justice and do righteousness?
3. Is sabbath-keeping a literal requirement for the messianic age?
4. What is "times-coloring"?
5. What status did foreigners and eunuchs have in relationship to the O.T. covenant?
6. How does Isaiah's promise to the eunuchs here fit in with N.T. doctrines?

7. Cite an example of a eunuch in N.T. times being accepted into Christ's covenant.

2. DOERS ARE DISCIPLES

TEXT: 56:6-8

- 6 Also the foreigners that join themselves to Jehovah, to minister unto him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to be his servants, everyone that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and holdeth fast my covenant;
- 7 even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.
- 8 The Lord Jehovah, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides his own that are gathered.

QUERIES

- a. How can these "foreigners" be brought to God's holy mountain?
- b. Who are the "others" of verse eight Jehovah will gather to Himself?

PARAPHRASE

When My new covenant is established by the Servant, many Gentiles will love the Lord and join themselves to Him and serve Him through obedience to the terms of the Servant's covenant. I, the Lord, will bring them to Zion and cause them to partake of all My blessings there; I will also allow them to minister to Me in Zion. Indeed, My new house shall be the

the house of worship for all nations. The same Lord who gathers the believing scattered ones of Israel will gather others from all the Gentile nations to join the gathered of Israel.

COMMENTS

v. 6 **GODLY**: Already there has been an abundance of predictions from Isaiah that Jehovah will join foreigners (Gentiles) to Zion in the coming messianic age. There are also a number of predictions that these New covenant citizens will become ministers in the New dispensation (cf. Isa. 60:3, 7, 10; Isa. 66:18-23; Zech. 14:16-19, etc.). These ungodly foreigners will "love" the name of Jehovah and keep His covenant ordinances (the new covenant). The foreigners, excluded from the covenant of Israel because of ceremonial and moral uncleanness, will be accepted because they love the name of Jehovah and choose to become His, taking His name as theirs (cf. Isa. 43:1-5). Every member of the new covenant is a priest (minister) (cf. I Pet. 1:5, 9; Heb. 13:15-16).

v. 7-8 **GATHERED**: Jehovah will not necessarily bring foreigners to the literal hill of Moriah where the Jewish temple stood. He will bring them to Zion (Heb. 12:22ff), the N.T. church (cf. Isa. 2:1-4). The following descriptive phrases, ". . . prayer . . . joyful . . . sacrifices accepted . . .," point to full covenant membership for foreigners. Gentiles will be restored to loving fellowship with the Creator through the Messiah and His new covenant. The Messiah's sacrifice (once for all, cf. Heb. 10:1-18) will atone for all men's sins. God's new house, Zion, will be for men of all nations (Eph. 2:11-22) a house of prayer (cf. Mk. 11:17) because the Messiah will cleanse God's house of those who profane it.

That Jehovah would someday give full covenant membership to Gentiles should not have been such an unlikely thing to the Jews. Verse seven is quoted by Jesus in Mark 11:17. Verse eight is quoted by Jesus in John 10:16. Yet, when Jesus stood and read Isaiah 61:1-2 and applied it to God's mercy extended

to Gentiles, even in O.T. times, they wanted to kill Jesus for it. The following excerpts illustrate the incorrigible obstinacy of the Jewish theologians to accept the predictions of their prophets that Jehovah would accept the Gentiles into full covenant relationship:

THE JEWISH VIEW OF GENTILES

(*Everyman's Talmud*, p. 66 & 371)

'Kill the best of the Gentiles! Crush the head of the best of snakes!' (Mech. to xiv, 7; 27a).

'Gentiles are addicted to licentiousness' (Jeb. 98a). The Rabbis were revolted by the low standards of conduct they saw practised around them and were thankful for the finer ideals which their religion offered them. A prayer, composed to be said on leaving the House of Study, reads: 'I give thanks before Thee, O Lord my God and God of my fathers, that Thou has set my lot among those who sit in the House of Study and the Synagogue, and hast not set my lot with those who frequent the theatres and circuses; for while I labour to inherit Paradise, they labour for the pit of destruction' (p. Ber. 7d).

The Holy One, blessed be He, clears Himself with respect to the gentile nations by giving them their reward for the minor precepts which they observed in this world so as to judge and sentence them in the World to Come, that they may have no plea to make and no merit can be found on their behalf' (Tanchuma Kedoshim - D).

'R. Eliezer declared, "No Gentiles will have a share in the World to Come; as it is said, 'The wicked shall return to the nether-world, even all the nations that forget God' (Ps. ix, 17); 'the wicked' refers to the evil among Israel." R. Joshua said to him, "If the verse had stated 'The wicked shall return to the nether-world and all the nations,' and had stopped there, I should have agreed with you. Since, however, the text adds, 'that forget God,' behold, there must be righteous men among the nations who will have a

share in the World to Come" (Tosifta Sanh. xiii. 2). That the righteous of all peoples will inherit the bliss of the Hereafter is the accepted doctrine of Rabbinic Judaism.

"The daughter of an Israelite may not assist a gentile woman in childbirth, since she would be assisting to bring to birth a child for idolatry." (Mishnah, A.Zar. 2.1)

Isaiah is not the only prophet to predict Gentile acceptance; see also Amos 9:11-12 (Acts 15:12-21); Micah 4:2; 7:15-17; Zech. 8:20-23; 9:9-10; 14:16-21. The point of Isaiah's remarks here seems to be that *anyone* who loves the name of Jehovah and keeps His covenant terms will be acceptable (cf. Acts 10:34-35). Doers are disciples!

QUIZ

1. How could Gentiles become "ministers" (priests)?
2. What do the words "prayer, joyful, sacrifices" point to for Gentiles?
3. Where does Jesus quote the verse about "house of prayer"?
4. Where does Jesus quote verse eight?
5. How adamant were Jews that Gentiles should not be allowed standing before God?

3. DUMB DOGS DENOUNCED

TEXT: 56:9-12

- 9 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest.
- 10 His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.
- 11 Yea, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds that cannot understand: they all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter.

12 Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill our-
 selves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day,
 a day great beyond measure.

QUERIES

- a. Who are the "dumb dogs"?
- b. Were the "shepherds" of Israel actually drunkards?

PARAPHRASE

Come like wild beasts, all you pagan nations, and devour this helpless people of Mine, says Jehovah. The watchmen of this people are blind to unbelief and covenant-breaking which is crippling them. The men who are supposed to be spiritual leaders of My people are like stupified dogs; they should be barking the alarm, but they do not because they have sated themselves with self-indulgence so they lie around lazily sleeping and dreaming. These so-called spiritual leaders are like greedy dogs that never get enough. They are like shepherds who cannot seem to understand that an enemy is about to attack their flock because they are completely engrossed in their own selfish pursuits of making money and they are oblivious to the needs of the flock. Not only are they profligates themselves, but they are busy trying to seduce others into their debauchery. They are advocating deliberate drunkenness in order to blot out any concern or responsibility for the spiritual problems facing Israel.

COMMENTS

v. 9 DESTRUCTION: This section (v. 9-12) connects to the main topic under consideration—Covenant Relationship. This section focuses on the major reason Isaiah was having such a

difficult time getting the majority of his countrymen to renew their messianic relationship with Jehovah. The spiritual leaders were corrupt. Because the nation of Israel had defaulted on its theocratic uniqueness, by dividing into two warring nations (Israel and Judah) and by assimilating idolatry, God was letting her suffer the due penalty of her error in her own body-politic. She tried to deceive pagan empires with treaties and alliances, pitting one against another. Israel exchanged her covenant relationship with the omnipotent Jehovah for vain and destructive covenants with God-opposing nations. Now those empires are poised to wreak destruction upon her (cf. Jer. 12:9; Ezek. 34:5, 8). The figure of speech under which Isaiah here delineates the nations which were enemies of God's people is "beasts" and is used elsewhere in Scripture for the same identification (cf. our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, pgs. 259-260; see also Revelation 13:1ff where Rome is symbolized as "beasts").

v. 10-12 DRUNKENNESS: The "watchmen" (spiritual leaders such as priests and judges) of Israel were blind. Isaiah refers to spiritual blindness which is a deliberate blindness; a blindness of the heart by choice. The spiritual leaders of Israel refused to acknowledge the dangers that were everywhere apparent to men of faith like Isaiah. Micah, (Micah 1:5) a prophet-contemporary of Isaiah, put his finger on the root cause of the sin of both Israel and Judah when he pointed to the capital cities of both nations as the place where corruption began and was at its worst. When the political and spiritual leadership of a nation is decadent, it does not take long for corruption to filter down into the entire fibre of the whole nation at grass-roots levels. Those who would aspire to positions of such leadership have a responsibility beyond their own personal lives—they have a responsibility to those who look to them for leadership in character as well as function.

Isaiah calls the leaders "dogs"! Dogs are mentioned about 40 times in the scriptures. They were not the friendly, domesticated dogs we know in the Western world today. They were half-wild, with some mixture of jackal or wolf, thin from want

of food and ill-natured, which roamed the streets or sometimes traveled with the nomadic shepherds of Palestine, (cf. Job 30:1, etc.). The apostle Paul uses "dogs" to symbolize the vicious Judaizers who were always trying to attack him and the church (cf. Phil. 3:2ff). Here, however, the "dogs" have lost their alertness and activeness because they have sated themselves on self-indulgence. They are mute! They just cannot get up the energy to bark. They really do not care to bark. No warning will come from these "critters" Every farm-boy has seen an illustration of this in the old hound who has filled himself with food and has gone off to lie down in the shade of a tree, hardly opening an eye when someone approaches—he just doesn't care. The whole picture is one of devotion to self-enjoyment and satisfaction and neglect of duty.

These "dogs" (leaders of the nation) are greedy gluttons. They are never satisfied. They must always have more. They are interested only in their own gain. Nothing will bring the downfall of a nation more rapidly than selfish hedonism in its leadership. When public servants serve only themselves, they set the same moral tone for the whole populace. The leaders of Israel prayed upon the flock (cf. Ezek. 34:1-10). They exploited and abused their constituents until the whole nation was sapped of its economic and moral fibre. Then the nation collapsed without the will to reform its morals, resist its enemies or return to the Lord. These leaders encouraged one another and the whole nation to drunkenness, (cf. Isa. 5:11, 22; 24:9—28:7; 29:9; Isa. 24:20; 51:21; Micah 2:11; etc.) Rather than face the reality of the consequences of their careless indulgence, they advocate an alcoholic stupefaction that will anesthetize their reasoning ability. Thus they will create for themselves a fool's paradise, saying, ". . . tomorrow shall be as this day, great beyond measure . . ."

QUIZ

1. How does this text connect to the previous discussion of Covenant Relationship?

FALSE TEACHERS AND TEACHING

2. Why does Isaiah use "beasts" to refer to pagan nations?
3. Why is it so dangerous for a nation's leadership to become drunkards?
4. Why is the word "dogs" so appropriate for the leaders of Isaiah's day?
5. Why the encouragement by the leaders for all the people to become drunkards?

SPECIAL STUDY

WHAT IS TO BE DONE CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Compiled by Paul T. Butler

1. Beware of them (be on the lookout for). (Matt. 7:15)
2. Know them (by their fruits, their works and doctrines). (Matt. 7:16)
3. Beware of their leaven-like doctrines. (Matt. 16:5-12) (cf. Gal. 5:9)
4. Follow God's word even when the teachers may be hypocritical or partisan. (Matt. 23:1-3) (cf. Phil. 1:15-18)
5. Let them alone. (Matt. 15:13-14)
6. Even if their doctrines are a result of centuries of national heritage, we must follow divinely revealed truth. (John 4:24)
7. Must not hear the voice of hirelings if we want to remain in the One true fold. (John 10)
8. We must follow only those who keep the word of the apostles. (John 15:20; 17:20)
9. We must follow only those who strive for unity. (John 17:21-23)
10. We must cautiously resist any teaching lest we be found fighting against God. (Acts 5:38-39)
11. We have apostolic precedent for debate with false teachers to defend truth. (Acts 6:8-10; 9:28-29; 10:1-18; 11; 13:6-12)
12. We are not to resist evil opposers to the point of reckless and foolhardy throwing away of our life. (Acts 14:1-7)