

F. EPILOGUE, CHAPTER 66

1. BURIAL OF OLD ZION

TEXT: 66:1-6

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest?
- 2 For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.
- 3 He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as he that offereth swine's blood; he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations:
- 4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear; but they did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.
- 5 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake, have said, Let Jehovah be glorified, that we may see your joy; but it is they that shall be put to shame.
- 6 A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies.

QUERIES

- a. What is the point of stressing the omnipotence of Jehovah?
- b. How is one who kills an ox like one who slays a man?
- c. How could those who cast others out say, Let Jehovah be glorified?

PARAPHRASE

What arrogance you disobedient ones manifest by thinking I will have anything to do with that building you call My Temple. The wickedness and hypocrisy you are practicing there are abominations to Me. I Am Omnipotent and Absolutely Holy; I am not like the provincial gods of the idolatrous heathen which have to have earthly houses to live in. Neither will I allow My name to be profaned by having it associated with your blasphemies. I created the whole universe; I am omnipresent and I desire an atmosphere of humility where I am worshipped. I dwell in people of afflicted and contrite hearts—those who respect and obey My word. But people like you, arrogant, haughty, rebellious and blasphemous—your hypocritical animal sacrifices are as abominable to Me as if you had made human sacrifices or offered an unclean sacrifice like a dog; your wicked attitudes make your attempts at ceremonial purification as repugnant as if you had offered swine's blood for your cleansing; your burning of incense is as ungodly as if you were worshiping an idol. This is so because you are arrogantly and blatantly doing these things when you know they are against My will. You are not making innocent mistakes; you are doing these abominations because you like them and want to mock Me. You worship the stars because you fear famine and pestilence; you worship pagan idols because you want to trust in the pagan nations of those idols; now I am going to use those very things you fear as a judgment upon you and prove to you that they are delusions. This is the alternative you have left Me, you rebellious people. When I spoke to you through My messengers, you refused to listen and obey. You deliberately did what I told you would profane My name and anger Me. Now, hear Me those of you who do respect and wish to obey My word: Those of this nation who claim to be your brothers but really hate you and make you outcasts of this society and mock you, saying, We have cast you out, but of course, you are Jehovah's so why don't you praise his name and rejoice now!—let Me tell you, says the Lord, it is these

arrogant mockers who will be soon put to shame. Very soon now there will be the clash, clatter and din of warfare heard from inside the walls of this very city—yea, even from within the temple you hold so dear shall come the noise of judgment. That noise will be the voice of Jehovah rendering His vengeance upon those who have deliberately declared war upon Him.

COMMENTS

v. 1-3 ABOMINABLE: Chapter 66 contains a three-part summarization of the whole book of Isaiah. First there is capsulation of the abomination of Isaiah's contemporaries and the coming judgment (66:1-6); second, the birth of new Israel (messianic age—church) (66:7-14); third, the proclamation of redemption to the whole world (66:15-24). These are the three major theses of the prophet and thus chapter 66 forms an appropriate epilogue.

These verses are not condemnations of houses of worship as such, nor were they intended to abrogate animal sacrifices for Isaiah's contemporaries. The prophet is condemning the arrogant hypocrisy of those who thought an earthly temple guaranteed the presence of Jehovah in their midst regardless of the wickedness of their motives and actions. Many of the Jews fell into the dangerous self-induced delusion that as long as their temple stood Jehovah *must* confine Himself there so their nation would never be without His presence and protection. This delusion is a consequence of spiritual immaturity and this-worldly-mindedness about the worship of God. Most of the Jewish rulers and religious leaders of Jesus' day trusted in their earthly temple, human priesthood and animal sacrifices but not in the Invisible God who made them. It is a common failure of human nature to demand that which can be "handled, touched and tasted" (cf. Col. 2:20-23; II Cor. 4:16—5:5, etc.). When the Pharisees of Jesus day wanted to make an oath by the highest thing they could think of, they made it on the temple or the gold of the temple (cf. Mt. 23:16-21). When Jesus

predicted the desolation of the city and the temple (Mt. 23:37-39), His own disciples could not believe it, so He gave an extended lesson to them about the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24:1-35) at the hands of the Romans. The fundamental issue of the entire book of Hebrews in the N.T. is that of "weaning" Hebrew Christians away from the powerful temptation to return to Judaism (abrogated by the new covenant) which appealed to the fleshly desire for a religion that centered in an earthly temple, touchable sacrifices, visible high-priesthood and religious hierarchy. Stephen, the martyr, condemned his Jewish brethren for not accepting the fact that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the temple stood for (Acts 7:44-53). The Jews were not alone in thinking the Creator could be reduced to human level and confined to earthly shrines. Paul reminded the idolaters of Athens that such ideas were illogical (cf. Acts 17:24-28). Young aptly says, "Those who would build a house influenced by such conceptions were seeking to render the infinite finite, the eternal temporal, and the Creator a mere creature."

Jehovah *does dwell* in a spiritual temple composed of people (cf. Eph. 2:11-22; II Pet. 2:5) of afflicted and contrite hearts. The Hebrew word *'anah* is translated *poor* but means literally, *afflicted*. It is from a root word that may also be translated *answer*. The idea is that God dwells in people who are poor in spirit or afflicted in the soul enough to answer God when He calls. God's presence dwells in a people who are humble and penitent, whether they have a "church building" or not. But the most elaborate building and the best well-organized religious system will never enjoy the presence of God if haughty, arrogant, independent and rebellious worshipers gather there. True worship of God is done in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:19-26) and *where* God is worshiped is secondary to that! When truth and righteousness are renounced for the sake of places, things and human traditions, it is an abomination before the Lord! Rituals and ceremonies are means to an end; they are vehicles of human expressions of faith and willing obedience to a Person — God. When the rituals and ceremonies become the objects

of our hope, they become idols! God Himself is the object of our hope; biblical commandments concerning acts of obedience or rituals or worship are revealed as acceptable ways men may express their faith in Him. There are two ways men turn biblically revealed rituals into abominations before the Lord: (a) make the rituals the object of their hope, or; (b) refuse to observe the ritual as the Lord commands it in His Word. The people of Isaiah's day were guilty of both. They were making their ability to keep the rituals the object of their hope which is trusting in self-righteousness, and they were also arrogantly mixing the practices of pagan idolatry with the worship of Jehovah. Sacrifices to God, no matter how often or how affluent, without the proper spirit and contrary to revealed truth are unacceptable to God (cf. Isa. 1:10-20; Ezek. 8:5-18; 14:1-11; I Sam. 15:17-23; Isa. 57:1-13; Micah 3:11; Mt. 5:23-24; 6:1-18; etc.). Observance of rituals contrary to biblical specifications and without humility toward the God who commanded them makes them abominations to God. A man may kill an ox and bring it to the temple for a sacrifice, but with an improper attitude toward God he may as well have offered a human sacrifice—both are equally abominable to God! Do men really realize how serious it is to observe religious ritual in an improper frame of mind and heart?! To give an offering or do any act of worship without a contrite heart is an affront to the Lord and as insulting as offering swine's blood! Such impersonal, rebellious, impenitent behavior exposes the real focus of the heart of a man—the ritual itself—and that is in fact, idolatry! Even people of the new covenant must be on guard against this tendency. Ananias and Sapphira fell—not in the amount given or not given to the Lord, but in the attitude they had in their heart (cf. Acts 5:1ff). Simon, the converted magician, fell—not in what he sought but the purpose for which he sought it (cf. Acts 8:9-13). Even the Corinthian church made the Lord's Supper an abomination before the Lord by the attitude of divisiveness in which they participated in it (cf. I Cor. 10-11). The church at Laodicea was an abomination to Christ—not because she was affluent but because of her

attitude toward her affluency.

Men will err and sin. Those who worship God will never be able to do so perfectly. The Lord will forgive those errors when men worship Him penitently, honestly and "trembling at His Word." But when men deliberately choose their own ways against those God has plainly revealed, and when they "delight" in doing what they know is contrary to His revealed will, He will not forgive.

v. 4-6 ABANDONED: What choice do men leave the Righteous and Just God when they delight in their abominations? The only choice God has is to leave them to their choice! God chooses their delusions as the instruments of their judgment. When God called and called, none were poor (*'anah*) enough in spirit to answer. When God spake, none obeyed (*shama'*). They plainly told God they did not want to hear from Him (cf. Isa. 30:9-11; Micah 2:6-11, etc.). They obstinately chose their own way against God's (cf. Jer. 6:16-18; 8:4-7, etc.). So the Lord let them have what they chose! The Lord abandoned them to their sins (cf. Ezek. 11:21-25; 39:23-24, etc.). They are given up to suffer in their own bodies the due penalties of their errors (cf. Rom. 1:27). Judah trusted in human schemes and human allies to keep her safe and prosperous, but her human allies betrayed her and turned on her. Judah's idol gods could not provide anything for her because they were only pieces of wood and stone. Judah's social injustices and political chicanery on the international scene eventually caused her captivity. But it was Jehovah who was exercising His sovereign rule in righteousness over the universe that was the real cause of it. God exercises His sovereign rule through secondary agents both in men and natural means (cf. Isa. 10:5-19; Jer. 27:1-11; Amos 4:6-11; Hab. 1:5-6; Dan. 8:1ff; Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1—9:21; 17:15-18, etc.).

In verse five, the Lord addresses Himself to those few people who were listening to the teaching of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 8:16ff) and being persecuted for their faithfulness. The majority of the people hated the righteous remnant. God's righteous minority will always be persecuted by the wicked majority

because their righteousness acts as a catalyst of judgment in their midst (cf. Jn. 3:18-21; 9:35-40; 15:18-27, etc.). The righteous minority of Isaiah's day had been "cast out" which probably means the haughty, self-righteous majority had ostracized them socially, religiously economically and politically. The poor and humble in spirit and those obedient to the Word of God were oppressed and exploited. The rich and powerful wicked mock them as they oppress them, saying, "Since you are so anxious to praise the name of Jehovah and call on Him for help, we will give you plenty of opportunity to call on Him by casting you out." Such perverse haughtiness in a people who had all the advantages of the miraculous deliverance of God from enemies centuries past and who had the Law of God delivered by angels through Moses, is shocking! It is blasphemous! But such mockery of God's saints in the midst of their persecutions will continue so long as this present order exists. All who live a godly life in this world will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). But God's vindication of His saints will be done—if not in this world, in the next!

As for those of Isaiah's day who were persecuting the righteous, they would themselves be cast out and suffer shame and humiliation for their disobedience to God in the Babylonian captivity. But Isaiah is looking past his own time by many centuries and hears the noise of warfare that comes from Jerusalem, the city that the wicked majority believed would never fall (Micah 3:11; Jer. 6:13-14; 8:11; 26:7-11; 28:1-17). Isaiah's prediction of Jerusalem's judgment refers to her fall at the hands of Rome (70 A.D.) as will be seen from the following text.

QUIZ

1. What did the majority of Isaiah's contemporaries think about God's presence in Jerusalem and the temple?
2. Are these verses intended to condemn building houses of worship?

3. Where does Jehovah dwell in the new covenant age?
4. Just how serious is it to worship with a haughty attitude?
5. How does chapter 66 form an epilogue to the whole book of Isaiah?
6. What is being "poor" and of a "contrite spirit"?
7. Did the people of Isaiah's day and later really think their city and temple would never fall?

2. BIRTH OF NEW ZION

TEXT: 66:7-14

- 7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a manchild.
- 8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? shall a nation be brought forth at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.
- 9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith Jehovah: shall I that cause to bring forth shut the womb? saith thy God.
- 10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn over her;
- 11 that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.
- 12 For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream: and ye shall suck thereof; ye shall be borne upon the side, and shall be dandled upon the knees.
- 13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
- 14 And ye shall see it, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like the tender grass: and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants; and he will have indignation against his enemies.

QUERIES

- a. Who is "she" and who is the "manchild" of verse seven?
- b. How will Jehovah extend the "glory of the nations" to Jerusalem?
- c. How will the Lord combine comfort to Jerusalem and indignation against his enemies?

PARAPHRASE

But a marvelous thing shall happen with Jerusalem. She will fall and this nation will be cast off by God and dispersed all over the world. She will be like a woman pregnant with child but she will miraculously give birth before the travail of labor pains come upon her. Before her time of judgment she shall deliver the predicted Son! At one stroke the nation that is destined for destruction shall produce a new nation. Such a miracle has never occurred before—no one has ever seen such an instantaneous birth of a nation! The reason such a miracle will occur is that Jehovah started this work. Will the Lord, having begun this new nation in its germinal form, not be able to bring it to completion? Rest assured that when I decide to bring something into existence, I will certainly do so, says God. Therefore, be jubilant with this news concerning new Jerusalem all you who love the place where God dwells and mourn over old Jerusalem's sin. Rejoice that you will be cuddled to her breast and drink deeply of her sustenance and find security, satisfaction and pleasure. This is what Jehovah says, I will fill her up and running over with goodness and glory from the best people of all the nations of the world and she will be nourished and cared for like a mother cares for her baby. Those who will be citizens of this miraculously-born new Jerusalem shall acknowledge this when it happens and they shall praise Jehovah for having brought them forth and causing them to grow and for manifesting Himself to them. The birth of God's new nation will become His pronouncement

of judgment upon all human attempts to usurp His sovereignty over man and the world. When God forms His new kingdom on the earth, it will, in fact, become a judgment upon all other kingdoms.

COMMENTS

v. 7-9 **MIRACULOUS:** That the pain and travail of verse six predicts the Roman destruction of Jerusalem is evident from what follows in these verses (7-14). Isaiah's prediction here of the birth of a new nation on the ruins of the old closely parallels the predictions of Daniel (see our comments on Daniel 9:24-27) who also looks forward to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

The point of verses seven through nine is to emphasize the miraculous nature of what God is going to do *before* He casts off old Zion finally and completely (at the Roman destruction). Before the Old covenant nation is destroyed, the "manchild" and the New covenant nation will be born. The *manchild* can be none other than the *son* and *child* of Isaiah 9:6 and *Immanuel* of Isaiah 7:14. He is the Messiah (the *anointed prince* of Dan. 9:25): The *manchild* of Isaiah 66:7 is the same, we believe, as the *manchild* born of the *woman* in Revelation 12:1-6. In the Revelation John sees the O.T. woman (faithful members of the Old covenant people) give birth to the manchild, the great red dragon (the devil) attempting to devour the manchild, and God catching the manchild up to heaven safe and secure. Just as in Isaiah 66:8, so in Revelation 12, the woman has a plurality of offspring or children. Of course, these children are joint-heirs with the only-unique Son (manchild) by adoption. He is the seed (singular, Gal. 3:16) and they are offspring (plural, Gal. 3:23-29, by adoption).

Old Jerusalem will produce the manchild and the offspring before her travail comes upon her. By a series of rhetorical questions Isaiah emphasizes the uniqueness of the predicted birth of the new nation. Who ever heard of a new nation from

an old nation *before* the old nation passes away? But even more unknown is the birth of a nation in one day! The Hebrew word *pa'am* is translated *at once* but means literally, *at one stroke*, as with one stroke of a hammer. A "land" and a "nation" was brought forth with one stroke of God on the Day of Pentecost, June, A.D. 30. Isaiah's figurative use of "land" should help us understand that much of what he (and other prophets, especially, Ezekiel) says about the future of God's "land" refers to the messianic "land" (or church), (cf. Ezek. 37:15-28; ch. 45-48, etc.).

The guarantee of all this is that Jehovah started it (with Abraham) and He will most certainly carry it through. When God promises, He fulfills. God does not lie; He is not a man that He repents or changes His mind or will. God's new nation (the Church) will be born; nothing will stop it (cf. our comments on Daniel 2:44-45, *Daniel*, College Press, pgs. 91-94). Not even the gates of Hades (death) shall prevail against the birth of God's church (cf. Mt. 16:18). God's new nation will be like no other nation ever on the face of the earth. Governments and cultures of human origin come and go, but God's nation (kingdom) will incorporate all races, tongues, cultures and classes, and will last forever. His kingdom is supernatural!

v. 10-14 MATERNAL: Isaiah continues the figure of a mother and her child. He pictures the citizens of the new Zion as hungry children contentedly nursing from the breasts of their mother. Zion's children drink deeply ("milk out") until they are completely satisfied. In contrast to those who rebel against God, who can never be satisfied (cf. Isa. 65:13-14; 9:20; Micah 6:14-15), new Zion will be satisfied (cf. Jer. 31:14; Isa. 25:6-9; 55:1-3; 58:11, etc.). Citizens of new Zion learn to be content (cf. Phil. 4:10-13; I Tim. 6:6-8); they have the peace which passes all understanding (cf. Phil. 4:4-7). It is interesting that this contentment, satisfaction, glory and peace which shall belong to new Zion comes to those in her who rejoice and mourn. It seems incongruous to talk of rejoicing and mourning at the same time. Yet the Lord pronounced those blessed who mourned (cf. Mt. 5:4). Only those who believe in the Lord

can comprehend this. Those who think that rejoicing can only come when there is nothing over which to mourn do not understand the meaning of joy as Jesus taught it (cf. John 15:1-11; 16:20-24; 16:33; 17:13-19, etc.). It is possible for the citizens of Zion to *mourn* over sin and all that results from it and at the same time *rejoice* in the salvation and future vindication of the Lord. When the citizen of Zion is able to do this he is at peace. Peace means wholeness (cf. comments Isa. 58:9) and Jehovah is going to fill new Zion's "land" up and running over with wholeness, prosperity and goodness like a river fills up and runs over its banks. Zion's wholeness will come as a result of the best of *goiym* (nations) being brought to her, (cf. our comments 61:5-7). Is there anything more tender and helpful than the comfort a mother gives a distressed child? Nothing except the comfort of God! But our God helps us understand His feeling toward us and His ability to comfort us in the highest experience of comfort we know—that of our mothers (cf. Isa. 49:15-16; 60:4, etc.). Jesus expressed His tenderness toward Jerusalem often (cf. Mt. 23:37-39; Lk. 19:41-44, etc.).

Those addressed in verse 14 as those who shall see these things are those who shall actually experience them, i.e., those who became the "nation brought forth" at one stroke (verses seven-nine). That generation alive when the Messiah was born (the manchild) and when the nation was brought forth (at Pentecost, A.D. 30), experienced the miracle of God and the maternalness of God (cf. Lk. 1:67-79; 2:29-35; 2:36-38; 24:13-53; Acts 2:43-47; 3:17—4:4; 4:32-37, etc.). The hand of Jehovah was seen and acknowledged in all this, not only by those who believed and became followers of the Way, but also by some who did not follow (cf. Acts 5:27-42; 26:28; 28:1ff, etc.). Not only will the redemptive hand and the providential hand of Jehovah be manifested in the birth of new Zion, but His judgmental hand will also be made known. It is the double-emphasis theme that runs throughout the biblical record of redemption. Whenever God redeems the faithful, He necessarily judges the unfaithful. God cannot reward righteousness without condemning unrighteousness. When He delivered Noah,

He destroyed the world; when He saved Lot, He destroyed Sodom; when He delivered the Hebrews under Moses, He destroyed Pharaoh; when He delivered Israel from captivity, He did so by destroying Babylon. The redemption provided in the atonement of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom, pronounces and gives unequivocal evidence of the final judgment of all who will not surrender to His sovereign rule by becoming covenant members of His church, (cf. Jn. 12:31; 16:11; 17:31; Eph. 4:8; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8; Rev. 19:15-16, etc.). God allowed His enemies (Satan and his kingdom) to gather all the power at their disposal and meet Him at Calvary and do battle there. It was at Calvary and the empty tomb that God redeemed the world and judged the world—potentially. Those who wish the redemption He won for them there must appropriate it by accepting His new covenant terms. Those who do not wish it must accept His judgment. The final execution of His redemption and judgment is yet future, but just as certain as the cross and the empty tomb! (see our comments *Minor Prophets*, College Press, pgs. 184-201).

QUIZ

1. Where else in the O.T. and the N.T. are the “woman and the manchild” referred to?
2. Why is the birth of the new nation of God so unique?
3. How can the citizens of the new nation rejoice and mourn at the same time?
4. How did God choose to illustrate His desire to comfort His people?
5. Where did God demonstrate with finality His redemption and judgment of the world?

3. BUILDING OF ZION

TEXT: 66:15-24

- 15 For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and his chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render his anger with fierceness, and his rebuke with flames of fire.
- 16 For by fire will Jehovah execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh; and the slain of Jehovah shall be many.
- 17 They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go unto the gardens, behind one in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, they shall come to an end together, saith Jehovah.
- 18 For I know their works and their thoughts: the time cometh, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and shall see my glory.
- 19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send such as escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations.
- 20 And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an oblation unto Jehovah, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring their oblation in a clean vessel into the house of Jehovah.
- 21 And of them also will I take for priests and for Levites, saith Jehovah.
- 22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain.
- 23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah.
- 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the dead bodies of the men that have transgressed against me: for their

worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

QUERIES

- a. Why repeat the message of judgment?
- b. What is the "sign" of verse 19?
- c. Who is going to come before Jehovah on new moon and sabbath?

PARAPHRASE

Yes, Jehovah must come with His judgment of wrath to prepare the way for the redemption of mankind. He comes in all the awful consuming fierceness of fire when He judges. His sword of judgment will fall upon the world. Those who have rejected the Lord will suffer His wrath and many will die. Yes, the manifest judgment of God is near upon all, both Israelite and Gentile who dedicate and purify themselves to idolatry, who follow those who indulge in perverseness like eating swine's flesh, mice and other abominable things contrary to My holy Law. I see what they do and I know their secret thoughts, says Jehovah. The time is coming when I will summon all nations and races to behold the ultimate demonstrations of My glory. At this time, men will see My awesome sign of redemption and judgment in its historical certainty, and some of them will escape the judgment I have pronounced upon the world. Those who escape I will send as messengers with the good news of My salvation to the far reaches of civilization to people who have never heard of Me and have never seen My sovereign omnipotence. These messengers will go to Spain, North Africa, Armenia, Greece and other lands beyond these. They shall proclaim My glory among men of all nations and races. All who hear and obey will become brethren and precious gifts to My honor. They will be brought to My New Zion from

all over the world; they will come from different directions, by every means possible. Many will come because some of the children of Israel will have accepted My salvation and offered themselves to Me in obedience. They will become messengers, bringing Gentiles to Me with that same faith and obedience; these Israelites will finally have offered Me clean offerings; these Gentiles will also be considered cleansed and I will consecrate them as My servants, says the Lord. For as surely as the new order which I am creating will last forever, so those who accept My salvation shall be My children forever and their relationship to My name shall stand forever. People from all nations will come into covenant relationship to Me and worship Me according to My will forever. These will behold My judgments upon those who were so favored but who rebelliously rejected My will; this will be a constant reminder of the terrible punishment of the rebellious and of the greatness of redemption to the obedient.

COMMENTS

v. 15-17 DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD: We repeat, for emphasis, this chapter (66) is an epilogue. First, judgment upon Israel for disobeying the Old covenant (verses 1-6); second, promise of a new Israel and a new order (verses 7-14); third, building the new order by destroying the old and opening up citizenship in the New order to the whole world (verses 15-24). J. A. Alexander, in *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, pub. Zondervan, says these verses are “. . . an integral part of the ‘great argument’ with which the whole book has been occupied, and which the Prophet never loses sight of to the end of the last sentence. The grand theme of these prophecies . . . is the relation of God’s people to himself and to the world, and in the latter stages of its history, to that race with which it was once outwardly identical. The great catastrophe with which the vision closes is the change of dispensations, comprehending the final abolition of the ceremonial law, and its

concomitants, the introduction of a spiritual worship and the consequent diffusion of the Church, its vast enlargement by the introduction of all Gentile converts to complete equality of privilege and honor with the believing Jews, and the excision of the unbelieving Jews from all connection with the church or chosen people, which they once imagined to have no existence independent of themselves.”

The emphasis of this final prophecy is on the establishment of the New messianic age and the gathering of the Gentiles into covenant relationship. In order to establish its fulfillment the Old order must be abrogated. The abrogation of the Old and the establishment of the New are coincidental— they are to occur at the same time, i.e., within a generation (cf. Mt. 24:34). The generation of the apostles (Peter, James, John, etc.) did not pass away until God had abrogated the Old order and instituted the New!

God's judgments are appropriately likened unto fire. Fire fiercely consumes (cf. Heb. 12:29; II Thess. 1:7-8, etc.). and is often representative of torment and punishment (cf. Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:10-11). Jehovah abrogated the Old order, in fact, at the cross of Christ (cf. Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 9:15-28, etc.). That was when God judged both the Mosaic system and all other human (Gentile) systems through which men tried to earn righteousness before Him. All human governments, religions, and ideologies are essentially human rebellions against the rule of God. They were all judged, exposed as inadequate, and destroyed in the power they might exercise over men at Calvary and the Empty Tomb. All human deviations from faith in God through His promised Son are idolatrous. They all fall under the generalized picture of abomination in verse 17. They all “came to an end together” in God's great redemptive-judgmental work in Jerusalem, 30 A.D., when Old Jerusalem had run its course and used up the time allotted to it (cf. Dan. 9:24-27). When the Suffering Servant had made atonement for sin and was raised from the dead destroying the ultimate power of the devil, Israel was to turn to Jehovah and accept citizenship in New Zion (the church). Some did,

but a majority did not. Jehovah, in His longsuffering allowed the Jewish nation to retain its city and temple for another 40 years (until 70 A.D.), and then, by His own providential design He allowed the city and the temple to be destroyed and burned and the nation dispersed over the face of the earth by the Roman empire. Thus, the fire of God's judgment fell both literally and figuratively upon the Old order and consumed it.

V. 18-24 DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW: Concurrent to the judgment of the Old order, Jehovah will establish the New order. The phrase "time cometh" connects the judgment of those who shall come to an end together and the "gathering of all nations and tongues" to see His glory. All nations would see God's glory in the two-fold accomplishment of the destruction of the Old and establishment of the New. Jehovah's historical *signal* that He was fulfilling His promises made through the prophets about all this was the Messiah! All who saw Jehovah's *signal* that human systems were overthrown believed in the Christ and were saved ("escaped") from that perverse generation (cf. Acts 2:40). These "escaped" ones (the Jews who became Christians at Pentecost and soon thereafter) were sent by the Lord unto the nations (Gentiles) where they announced the great historical events of redemption which glorified God. Perhaps some of the early Gentile converts (e.g., Cornelius) were also among the "sent" ones. Tarshish, if our conjecture is right, is Spain (at the extreme west of the Great Sea); Pul is probably Put in North Africa (the extreme southern boundary); Lud is probably Lydia in Asia Minor (northern boundary); and Tubal and Javan are Armenia and Greece respectively (generally forming a northern boundary). These nations are mentioned to emphasize the extreme distances to which the escapees shall be sent with their declaration of the glory of Jehovah.

Those escapees who are sent are going to bring "brethren out of all the nations." Apparently the apostle Paul had this scripture in mind when he referred to his ministry of bringing the Gentiles to Christ as an *offering* unto God (cf. Rom. 15:16). The prophet's designation of *goiym* from all nations being

brought forth as "brethren" of the covenant people is unique! Many of the prophets predicted that the Gentiles would one day be brought to Jehovah, but none (save in this one place) referred to them as "brethren"! The reference to various beasts of burden and vehicles of transportation pictorializes the ease, swiftness and splendor in which the Gentiles will be brought to the Lord. The "holy mountain" is a favorite phrase of Isaiah to designate the messianic age (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 11:9; 56:7; 57:3; 65:11, 25, etc.).

From the Gentiles Jehovah will take "priests and Levites." In the New age (the church) all citizens are priests (cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10, etc.). This may have a more specific reference, however, to the special ministry of those "sent" (even of early Gentile converts) to the extreme boundaries of civilization to "bring brethren out of all the nations." In other words, it may refer to Gentile converts chosen especially by God as ministers and missionaries to declare the glory of God, e.g., Timothy, Luke, Cornelius and others.

The next verses (22-24) emphasize the finality and perpetuity of the establishment of the New order and the judgment of the Old order. We have already established our view that the term "new heavens and new earth" as Isaiah uses it means the New Order (the messianic age) (cf. Isa. 65:17ff). The prophets talk of a whole *new* age to come when the Servant of Jehovah appears:

- a. There shall be *new* things told by God (Isa. 42:9; 48:6-7).
- b. God's people will sing a *new* song (Isa. 42:10).
- c. God will make a completely *new* covenant (Jer. 31:31ff).
- d. God will put a *new* heart and spirit in men (Ezek. 18:31; 36:26).
- e. They will have a *new* name (Isa. 62:2).

There are many other references to the *newness* of the age to follow the old one where the word *new* is not specified but inferred. Just as this new creation will be God's final covenant and just as this new order will last forever, so those who enter

into the covenant will be His people forever. That was prophesied by Hosea (Hos. 2:16-23; 3:5) and fulfilled according to the apostles (Rom. 9:24-33; I Pet. 2:9-10). The name God gives His New Covenant people will remain upon them forever (cf. Rev. 2:17; 3:12; 14:1; 22:4). Old Israel with its old covenant, old name, and old institutions shall pass away (cf. Jer. 3:15-18) and not even be remembered! But from the old will spring the remnant that survives God's casting off, and together with the remnant will be a great gathering of Gentiles to form the true Israel of God which is a "new creation" (cf. Gal. 6:15-16)!

Isaiah was a preacher-prophet to the people of the Old dispensation. He must communicate his message about the New dispensation in terminology and forms to which those of the old dispensation could relate. So, using the terminology of "new moon and sabbath," Isaiah predicts that in the new order there will be faithful, regular, worship of God which will be pleasing to Him. This brief picture of worship in the new dispensation given by Isaiah is dramatically paralleled and expanded in Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, and in Zechariah 14:16-21. Verse 23 is Isaiah's picture of the situation with new Zion after its creation. Verse 24 is the prophet's description of the relationship of the New, true worshipers, to what they see concerning the Old dispensation which has been judged and destroyed or abrogated. The New citizens of Zion are safe within her walls, worshiping Jehovah gladly and truly. Occasionally New Zion's citizens "look upon the dead bodies" of those who have transgressed against Jehovah and the sight of His judgment upon the sinners reminds Zion of the greatness of its redemption and the awful terror of God's punishment from which she has been saved. The undying worm and the unquenchable fire is figurative use of Gehenna where the Jews disposed of dead carcasses of criminals.

Christians witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and were reminded of the fate of all who disobey God and reject His Son and warned that a similar fate awaits an unbelieving world when Jesus comes back to earth at the end of time (Mt. 24:1-51). New Zion is directed to "look upon

the dead" Roman culture of the first and second centuries (Rom. 1:18-32; Revelation, chapters 17-20:6) and rejoice for salvation while also being warned against partaking in Rome's sin.

Isaiah's pictorialization of the great judgment of God upon impenitent Israel and the founding of a new order upon the ashes of the old has parallels: (a) the great battle of Gog and Magog and the new land, city and temple of Ezekiel, chapters 38-48; (b) the great battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat and the escape of those who call upon the name of the Lord in Joel 2:28—3:21; (c) the battle and victory the "king" will win, the purging of the land, and the practice of purified worship depicted in Zechariah 9:9—14:21. So Isaiah closes his great prophecy predicting, not the end of time but the end of the Old dispensation and the creation by God of a New dispensation. Isaiah is predicting the *first* coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, the church, not the *second* coming of the Messiah.

Essentially Isaiah's message is that God's great plan to redeem the world involves the incarnation of the Word in the person of the Suffering Servant; the atonement for sin by the Servant; the offering of a new covenant relationship of grace through faith; the incorporation into that covenant relationship and the formation of a New Zion from all in the world who will believe and accept its terms; the judgment and punishment forever of all who will not accept it.

QUIZ

1. How is chapter 66 an epilogue?
2. Why use fire as a picture of God's judgments?
3. In what way is the judgment of the old connected to the establishment of the new?
4. Why list the names of the nations in verse 19?
5. What is unique about the term, "bring all your brethren . . . "?

6. Who are the "priests and Levites" of verse 21 and from whence do they come?
7. Who goes forth to look upon the dead (verse 24) and when?
8. How would you sum up the message of the whole book of Isaiah?

And now, dear reader, having lived some portion of each day of our life for the last four years with the majesty and awesomeness of this work from the pen of Isaiah, we are impressed very deeply that the one great necessity for a world of unbelief is it must be brought face to face, mind to mind, heart to heart with the glory of God. Men must be taught, must acknowledge and put their trust in *who God is* and not in what man can do! The focus of the prophets on the character and nature of God is the true focus of all preaching. Now, in the end of the ages, the glory and personhood of God has been revealed incarnate in Jesus Christ and His accomplished redemption. And that is the ultimate focus of all preaching. Now therefore, be wise

PSALM 2

- 2 Why do the nations rage,
And the peoples meditate a vain thing?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against Jehovah, and against his anointed, *saying*,
- 3 Let us break their bonds assunder,
And cast away their cords from us.
- 4 He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh:
The Lord will have them in derision.
- 5 Then will he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure:
- 6 Yet I have set my king
Upon my holy hill of Zion.
- 7 I will tell of the decree:

Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son;
This day have I begotten thee.

- 8 Ask of me, and I will give *thee* the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
- 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
- 10 Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
- 11 Serve Jehovah with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the son, lest he be angry,
and ye perish in the way.
For his wrath will soon be kindled.
Blessed are all they that take refuge in him.

EXAMINATION

CHAPTERS SIXTY THROUGH SIXTY-SIX

DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>wealth of the nations</i> | 8. <i>covenant</i> |
| 2. <i>Spirit upon me</i> | 9. <i>married</i> |
| 3. <i>meek</i> | 10. <i>ensign</i> |
| 4. <i>liberty</i> | 11. <i>Edom</i> |
| 5. <i>year of Lord's favor</i> | 12. <i>Zion</i> |
| 6. <i>strangers</i> | 13. <i>swine's flesh</i> |
| 7. <i>priests</i> | 14. <i>new heavens and earth</i> |

MEMORIZATION

The _____ of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath _____ me to preach good tidings unto the _____; he hath sent me to _____ up the broken-hearted, to proclaim _____ to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are _____; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's _____, and the day of vengeance of our God; to _____ all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in _____, to given unto them a _____ for ashes, the oil of _____ for mourning, the garment of _____ for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called _____ of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah that he may be _____. (61:1-3)

EXPLANATION

1. Explain how Zion would be built by foreigners.
2. Explain what the One anointed by the Lord was to declare.
3. Explain the new name Zion was to receive.
4. Explain the Holy Spirit's relationship to believers in the O.T.
5. Explain why God said former things would not be remembered.
6. Explain how God created a land in one day (brought forth at once a nation).
7. Explain how people of Zion look upon dead bodies.

APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. Does Isaiah's prediction of the year of the Lord's favor at the coming of the Messiah apply to our understanding of

biblical eschatology?

2. Does Isaiah's symbolic use of Edom in chapter 63 contribute anything to present day understanding of the relation of Zion to the world?
3. Does the impatient prayer of Zion in chapters 64-65 have any application to New Zion?
4. How can we apply the statement, ". . . bless himself in the God *truth* . . ." to our concept of God today?
5. Does the symbolic use of "new heaven and new earth" in chapter 66 apply to our eschatological understanding of the O.T.?
6. What is the main application concerning the nature of God from the book of Isaiah?