

Isaiah – Chapter 56

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Theme: The grand promises of Messiah's reign are for all kinds of men, if righteous; Israel to be ruined.

Outline:

- 1-2 Exhortation to Godliness for Messiah's Reign
- 3-5 Comfort to Eunuchs for a Place with Messiah
- 6-8 Comfort to Gentiles for a Place with Messiah
- 9-12 Warning of Israel's Ruin and Profane Pastors

Preparatory Reading: Isaiah chapters 1, 11, 58; Jeremiah 23; Ezekiel 34.

Related Links:

- 1. [Exposition of Isaiah 1](#) (*False Religion*).
- 2. [Exposition of Isaiah 11](#) (*Find Outcasts*).
- 3. [Exposition of Isaiah 58](#) (*Hard Pastors*).
- 4. [Prophets of God](#) (*Character*).
- 5. [Instant Preaching](#) (*Urgent Pressing*).
- 6. [Rude Preachers](#) (*Graphic, Extreme*).

Introduction:

- A. Previous chapters set forth grand and glorious promises concerning Messiah and His coming kingdom.
 - 1. Chapter 52 introduced coming gospel blessings in general and Messiah in particular for all nations.
 - 2. Chapter 53 detailed the justifying work of Jesus on the cross and sharing God's reward with us.
 - 3. Chapter 54 described the Jewish church exploding with Gentiles and God's many varied blessings.
 - 4. Chapter 55 described the gospel feast of fat things, the Son of David, and certain promises of good.
 - 5. These things would most surely come to pass for the everlasting glory and praise of God the giver.
- B. This chapter is different – great change in theme – as the righteous are exhorted and wicked warned.
 - 1. The simple outline above and its four points provide the frame to view this short, simple chapter.
 - 2. After exhorting to righteousness, Isaiah comforted eunuchs and Gentiles for exclusion by Israel.
 - 3. Then he told the nation that judgment was coming and the great guilt of its lazy and vile pastors.
 - 4. Chapter 57 will detail some of Israel's crimes and God's mockery of their false and vain idolatry.
- C. Timing by small and large context and features in chapters 56 and 57 indicate Manasseh and Babylon.
 - 1. Manasseh was Hezekiah's son, and Isaiah may have lived long enough to see his great wickedness.
 - 2. Jewish tradition says that Manasseh killed Isaiah by having him sawn asunder (Hebrews 11:37).

3. Manasseh was Judah's most wicked, idolatrous king and pushed God too far for retaining mercy.
4. Hezekiah's reign was better than described by the lazy and profane pastors here (Isaiah 56:9-12).
5. There is no reason to return to Assyrians, for their prophecies and history are replaced by Babylon.
6. We suppose it the time of Manasseh, but it hardly matters whether Ahaz or Zedekiah, alternatives.
7. The history of Manasseh's character and sins matches what is in the next chapter (II Kgs 21:1-6).
8. Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was the worst king of Judah by his abominable idolatry and sins.
9. He profanely even built altars in the LORD's temple in Jerusalem in his rebellion (II Kgs 21:1-9).
10. He also killed many innocent in Jerusalem to fill it with murder from end to end (II Kings 21:16).
11. God planned to punish the Jews in great ferocity for their great sins by his reign (II Kgs 21:10-15).
12. But before He severely judged and ruined the city, He planned righteous and merciful men to die.
13. They likely died by the hand of Manasseh in chapter 57, for they *perished* and were *taken away*.
14. The number of righteous became so scarce Jeremiah and God denied any left (Jer 5:1; Ezek 22:30).
15. This chapter refers to the gathering of outcasts of the Jews and Gentiles after Babylon (Is 56:8).

Exhortation to Godliness for Messiah's Reign – Verses 1-2

1 Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

1. As the introduction explained, this is a rather significant change from previous chapters.
 1. The previous four chapters introduced or detailed Messiah and kingdom promises.
 2. But now for four chapters Isaiah will rebuke the nation for sins and foretell judgment.
2. *Thus saith the LORD* are the most important and valuable words to introduce content.
3. Jehovah, the one God of Israel, exhorted His people to keep judgment and to do justice.
 1. *Judgment*, as often used, means to be fair, right, and wise, as in using good judgment.
 2. Note how the first chapter warned Israel of the sin of lacking judgment (Is 1:17,21).
 3. Learn it by context (Is 5:7; 9:7; 10:2; 16:3,5; 28:7; 32:1; 42:1-4; 51:4; 59:8-15; 61:8).
 4. *Judgment* in this context is doing what is honest, right, and wise in all life situations.
 5. *Doing justice* is like keeping judgment, like salvation and righteousness are similar.
 6. Israel lacked in justice, or equity, like they did in judgment (Is 9:7; 58:2; 59:4,9,14).
 7. Messiah would do judgment and justice far better than the nation (Isaiah 9:7; 11:4).
 8. To do justice is to do justly, to be fair, equitable, right (Gen 18:19; Ps 82:3; Mic 6:8).
4. The reason He gave for them to do so was the promised era of Messiah not too far away.
 1. Salvation and righteousness are similar like judgment and justice in the first clause.
 2. Salvation near and righteousness revealed is the gospel (Is 49:5-12; 51:4-7; 55:1-5).
 3. This is more than preparation for release from Babylon by context before and next.
 4. Promised blessings of Messiah and His kingdom should provoke godliness by all.

5. Like Psalm 91, the promises of God of earthly blessings have conditions attached.
6. John the Baptist prepared men – to make ready a people for the Lord (Luke 1:17).
7. Reader, are you ready for Christ's second coming? You should be (II Pet 3:10-14).

2 Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

1. God favors the righteous – now and later. His blessings are conditional on obedience.
 1. God's blessings – are the result of the condition – not the condition of the action.
 2. We are not fatalists, so we do not try to read everything as if we were automatons.
2. There is no difference between *man* and *son of man* – simply men (Is 51:12; Job 25:6).
3. We choose the demonstrative pronoun *this* and the pronoun *it* to be what follows here.
 1. The demonstrative pronoun *this* represents things close at hand – the next things.
 2. The previous requirements – judgment and justice – are separated by the purpose.
 3. The rest of this short chapter will apply God's blessings on Sabbath keepers (Is 56:6).
4. Isaiah is in the Old Testament, so any reference to the Sabbath should surprise none.
 1. It was one of Israel's great faults due to inordinate love of income and production.
 2. As the chapter progresses to include Sabbaths under Messiah, think N.T. worship.
 3. Prove N.T. worship to Sabbatarians here by inclusion of burning animals (Is 56:7).
5. Let this verse be an obscure division of God's law into God (piety) and others (charity).
 1. The first four commandments pertain directly to worship of God and its prohibitions.
 2. The following six commandments pertain directly to our relationship to all others.
 3. Thus, the two great commandments in another format – love of God and of others.
 4. This is comparable to the pure religion of charity and holiness elsewhere (Jas 1:27).
6. God's blessings are for those that will do right and lay hold of right to not stop doing it.
 1. Polluting the Sabbath was doing those things on the seventh day God had prohibited.
 2. But always remember that God allowed mercy on that day (Matt 12:7; Mark 2:27).
 3. Your hands are synecdoche for your entire body, as a captain calls all hands on deck.
 4. Your hands touch many things e.g. store items, lovemaking, alcohol, remote control.

Comfort to Eunuchs for a Place with Messiah – Verses 3-5

3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

1. Here are two lessons, two sections of this chapter, for two different classes of persons.
 1. *Stranger*= Gentiles outside Israel by natural descent (Ge 17:12; Ex 12:19,43-44,48).
 2. *Eunuch*= castrated male for several reasons, often harems (II Kgs 9:32; Isaiah 39:7).
 3. Both the stranger (Gentile) and the eunuch were full converts to Jehovah's religion.

2. There were Gentiles saved by grace that would worship only Israel's true God Jehovah.
 1. The religion in focus here, by the context, including Gentiles, is Messiah's kingdom.
 2. They are called proselytes in the New Testament (Matthew 23:15; Acts 2:10; 13:43).
 3. Think of Rahab and Ruth as two great examples of Gentiles that became as the Jews.
 4. They were totally committed to Israel's God and religion, those two above the Jews.
 5. T. discrimination against the Gentiles and eunuchs lasted to Jesus and the apostles.
3. There were eunuchs made so by various ways and for various reasons that were saved.
 1. One of the greatest men found in the entire Bible was a eunuch – the beloved Daniel.
 2. The first Ethiopian eunuch was a friend of Jeremiah to king Zedekiah (Jer 38:7-13).
 3. One of the great N.T. facts of evangelism was Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch.
 4. Jesus told of men that made themselves eunuchs for God, like Paul (Matt 19:10-12).
4. The verse is a prohibition – it is a warning – but the verse is a very comforting warning.
 1. It is a prohibition and warning of self-pity or complaint in light of the Jew's religion.
 2. Strangers had to know, for it was written everywhere, they were inferior outsiders.
 3. Eunuchs had to know, for it was written of them, they could not enter (Deut 23:1).
 4. For those confused about anatomical damage, read further (Deuteronomy 23:2-3).
 5. Eunuchs were discriminated in the church because of the pagan practice causing it.
 6. Eunuchs by accident were discriminated for lacking the full image of God for a seed.
 7. If you do not understand this, then you may miss more (Genesis 15:4; 24:1-4; etc.).
 8. Bastards were denied full church benefits due to the whoredom necessary for one.
 9. Ammonites and Moabites were rejected due to their vile persecution of the nation.
5. Hear this: instead of worrying about men with injured testicles, think of God's inclusion.
 1. The Gentiles, excluded from some privileges in the O.T., would have all in the N.T.
 2. The eunuchs, excluded from some privileges in the O.T., would have all in the N.T.
 3. John, Jesus, and His apostles turned the religious world upside down (Luke 16:16).
 4. The depth of the mystery (new info for Gentiles) was to Paul (Ep 2:11-22; 3:1-13).
6. Never let anyone alter our church from its N.T. standard of total inclusion of all kinds.
 1. Paul blasted the foolish and wicked distinctions the Jews held (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).
 2. By God's special favor – prophecy – see Messiah's church *for all people* (Is 56:7).
 3. Philip, full of the Holy Ghost, never hesitated to baptize a double-reject, for the Ethiopian eunuch was both a stranger (Gentile) and a eunuch. Glory! Here we stand.
 4. Thank God your present church has three races and several nations represented here.
 5. I have had to deal with British Israelism and Two House theology this very week.
 6. The only converts we might question an extra minute or two would be actual Jews.
 7. We will always ignore ... and should even give greater honor to any ... sex, caste, country, culture, color, rank, anatomy, education, employment, finances, etc.

4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

1. God first addressed eunuchs, mentioned last in the previous verse, about His religion.
 1. *Eunuch* = castrated male for several reasons, often harems (II Kgs 9:32; Isaiah 39:7).
 2. T. discrimination against the Gentiles and eunuchs lasted to Jesus and the apostles.
2. All that matters to God is obedience, and that is all that should be preached to eunuchs.
 1. These eunuchs were those that converted to the Jews' religion, including sabbaths.
 2. These eunuchs were those that practiced judgment and justice and avoided all sins.
 3. These eunuchs were those that took hold of God's covenant, but what covenant here?
 4. Retaining the covenant type, it would be all the terms of blessing or curses of Moses.
 5. With the antitype in context, it would be the everlasting covenant of David (Is 55:3).
3. Our relationship with all men should be the same – by their obedience to Jesus Christ.
 1. With Paul we reject nation, education, culture, race, sex, employment, or economics.
 2. As with all men and women, we approve or disapprove by spiritual measurements.
 3. It is easy to grade Christians from good to belly worshippers (Phil 3:18-19; Tit 1:8).
4. God made a prophetic declaration about converted eunuchs in the verse's second half.
5. Let your heart rejoice to think of the Ethiopian eunuch – rejected for both these reasons.

5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

1. Converted eunuchs would not have any difference made at all in the N.T. house of God.
 1. As explained in the previous two verses, there was discrimination in Moses' law.
 2. There is good reason for them not to complain – they have perfect standing in Christ.
 3. What the Jews would understand as tabernacle or temple, we know it is the church.
 4. For the church of the living God is the house and temple of God (I Timothy 3:15).
2. Eunuchs – rejected by most men and Moses' law – would have full standing in Christ.
 1. They would be equal to any other citizen of Zion of the N.T. church of Jesus Christ.
 2. Their place in the church would be better than any other, as David wrote (Ps 84:10).
 3. They would have the name of Christian both in actual fact and in all intended senses.
 4. They would be named *sons of God*, like their older brother, the greatest title of all.
 5. They would be joint-heirs with Jesus and take possession of the universe with Him.
 6. Their personal names would be found in the book of life of the Lamb for eternal life.
3. The blessing in Christ totally transcends any benefit or pleasure from family or children.
 1. What honor is there in children or family? Do not wild asses and skunks also breed?
 2. Truly, the Bible does praise offspring (Ps 127:3-5), but little in this better context.
 3. Thus, we see from another angle our Lord's warning about family (Luke 14:25-33).

4. Let your heart rejoice to think of the Ethiopian eunuch – he was a eunuch and a Gentile.

Comfort to Gentiles for a Place with Messiah – Verses 6-8

6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

1. God second addressed strangers, mentioned first in the introduction, about His religion.
 1. *Stranger*= Gentiles outside Israel by natural descent (Ge 17:12; Ex 12:19,43-44,48).
 2. They are called proselytes in the New Testament (Matthew 23:15; Acts 2:10; 13:43).
 3. T. discrimination against the Gentiles and eunuchs lasted to Jesus and the apostles.
2. All that matters to God is obedience, and that is all that should be preached to Gentiles.
 1. These Gentiles were those that converted to the Jews' religion, including sabbaths.
 2. These Gentiles were those that practiced judgment and justice and avoided all sins.
 3. These Gentiles were those that loved the name of Israel's God, the LORD Jehovah.
 4. These Gentiles chose to serve (obey and worship) the God Jehovah of the Israelites.
 5. These Gentiles would keep Israel's sabbath and not pollute it by prohibited activities.
 6. These Gentiles were those that took hold of God's covenant, but what covenant here?
 7. Retaining the covenant type, it would be all the terms of blessing or curses of Moses.
 8. With the antitype in context, it would be the everlasting covenant of David (Is 55:3).
3. Our relationship with all men should be the same – by their obedience to Jesus Christ.
 1. With Paul we reject nation, education, culture, race, sex, employment, or economics.
 2. As with all men and women, we approve or disapprove by spiritual measurements.
 3. It is easy to grade Christians from good to belly worshippers (Phil 3:18-19; Tit 1:8).
4. God made a prophetic declaration about converted Gentiles in the verse's second half.

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 mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

1. Converted Gentiles would not have any difference made at all in the N.T. house of God.
 1. As explained in early verses in this chapter, there was discrimination in Moses' law.
 2. There is good reason for them not to complain – they have perfect standing in Christ.
 3. What the Jews would understand as tabernacle or temple, we know it is the church.
 4. For the church of the living God is the house and temple of God (I Timothy 3:15).
2. Gentiles – rejected by the Jews and Moses' law – would have full standing in Christ.
 1. They would be equal to any other citizen of Zion of the N.T. church of Jesus Christ.
 2. God would bring them by His sovereign providence and called preachers to Christ.

3. He would give them a place in His church second to none, filling them with true joy.
 4. They would not be shamed as being uncircumcised heathen – they would be Christ's.
 5. The altar of Moses was closed to Gentiles, but the N.T. altar would be open to them.
 6. God would accept their N.T. sacrifices of all kinds through Jesus Christ (I Pet 2:5).
 7. Of course, any blessing you can read to the eunuchs earlier would also be to Gentiles.
3. The church of Christ – the house of God – would be for all people, even all the Gentiles.
 1. The Gentiles, excluded from some privileges in the O.T., would have all in the N.T.
 2. John, Jesus, and His apostles turned the religious world upside down (Luke 16:16).
 3. The depth of the mystery (new info for Gentiles) was to Paul (Ep 2:11-22; 3:1-13).
 4. Never let anyone alter our church from its N.T. standard of total inclusion of all kinds.
 1. Paul blasted the foolish and wicked distinctions the Jews held (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).
 2. Any alteration to full inclusion denies the prophecy and its God from above (Is 56:3).
 3. Philip, full of the Holy Ghost, never hesitated to baptize a double-reject, for the Ethiopian eunuch was both a stranger (Gentile) and a eunuch. Glory! Here we stand.
 4. Thank God your present church has three races and several nations represented here.
 5. The only converts we might question an extra minute or two would be actual Jews.
 5. Do not be confused or intimidated by the language here of burnt offerings and sabbaths.
 1. Isaiah preached and wrote to Jews 700 years before Paul, so he used O.T. terms.
 2. This is clearly the church of Jesus Christ, Messiah's kingdom, thus N.T. worship.
 3. Gentile converts are kings and priests offering up spiritual sacrifices (I Peter 2:5).
 4. Compare Malachi 3:1-5, where the prophet also used O.T. terms for N.T. religion.

8 The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

1. The summary here is beautiful – Jehovah the ruler of all would bring all into His church.
 1. There are two groups of outcasts gathered here – the first ones and then also others.
 2. To build the church of Jesus Christ, God first gathered together scattered, elect Jews.
 3. This had been taught clearly by Isaiah and by David (Isaiah 11:10-16; Psalm 147:2).
 4. It had then been repeated by Isaiah when God promised more than Jews (Is 49:4-6).
 5. Beside gathering the remnant Jews, God would also gather together many Gentiles.
 6. He would not only rebuild His nation and kingdom with Jews but with Gentiles also.
2. Those that Israel cast out – Gentiles and eunuchs – would be brought in by His Messiah.
 1. This had been prophesied 800 years before to Jacob about Shiloh coming (Ge 49:10).
 2. Jesus would declare His work to bring the Gentiles into God's one fold (John 10:16).
 3. Caiaphas, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, declared the same truth (John 11:49-52).
3. If you ever feel like an outcast anywhere else, all do more or less, not in Christ's church.

4. Let your heart rejoice to think of the Ethiopian eunuch – he was a eunuch and a Gentile.

Warning of Israel's Ruin and Profane Pastors – Verses 9-12

9 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest.

1. This lesson and section goes with the next chapter in content, but we will accept it here.
 1. The verses are a drastic change in theme and style after comforting grace to outcasts.
 2. The rest of the 50s is critical warnings of Israel's sins leading to coming judgment.
2. God called wild beasts – representing foreign armies – to come and devour the sinners.
 1. This is not a unique use of words, for it is elsewhere (Jer 12:9; 50:17; Ezek 39:17).
 2. Remember prophetic similitudes, which are metaphorical word pictures (Hos 12:10).
 3. While the Dispensationalists are literalists in Isaiah 11:6-9, they should be here also.
3. The big question is ... Which destruction of Jerusalem and the Jews is this warning for?
 1. We could force the interpretation and application to be after Messiah in the context.
 2. But we cannot overlook the fact that Isaiah had a very real audience before Babylon.
 3. There have been chapters throughout the fifty-five so far about Israel's present sins.
 4. We will take the most direct approach to this 3.5 chapter section as before Chaldeans.
 5. However, it has applicable crimes, principles, warnings, fulfillments of Rome also.

10 His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

1. The watchmen of God in the Bible are mainly the preachers and teachers of the people.
 1. God used this term especially with Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:17; 33:2; Hosea 9:8; Is 52:8).
 2. Pastors are watchmen for looking out for the danger and risk of God's judgment.
 3. They must be vigilant to warn of conduct that brings God's chastening (I Tim 3:2).
 4. It is a judgment of God when ministers are not vigilant in this way (Isaiah 29:10).
2. God through Isaiah condemned the ministerial association as being worthless in duties.
 1. The watchmen – pastors, prophets, priests – were blind to the coming destruction.
 2. Think reader! Think of God's creative genius. Watchmen watch. These are blind.
 3. These ministers were ignorant of the real character of the nation and God's holiness.
 4. They had no clue of the threat (wild beasts in context) that were coming to devour.
3. By prophetic license with another similitude – Isaiah compared pastors to watchdogs.
 1. A cure for wild beasts getting close to a camping tent or house is to have a watchdog.
 2. But these watchdogs (Israel's pastors) were dumb – they could not bark as intended.
 3. They are like dogs that lie down to sleep and are not roused by rustling grass nearby.
 4. The ministerial association was worthless in Israel and would not protect from harm.
4. Let every pastor take heed, as apostles warned (I Tim 4:16; Titus 1:9-16; Jude 1:3-4).

1. What is the crucial prophecy and cure in the Bible for this time (II Tim 3:1 – 4:4)?
2. What is a pastor's job for his hearers – make war against their ideas (II Cor 10:4-6)?
3. What is a pastor's job for hearers – free himself from blood (Ezek 3:18; Acts 20:26)?
4. He must preach the word to be a watchful watchdog (II Timothy 4:2; Acts 20:20,27).
5. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus about certain heresy and traitors (Acts 20:28-35).
5. Let the opening verse of a nearby chapter be the clarion call for pastors (Isaiah 58:1).

11 Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

1. The prophets and priests had turned their ministries in moneymaking ventures for greed.
 1. They were only interested in their own advantages and profit by using the ministry.
 2. The prophets, especially Ezekiel, warned about these greedy leeches (Ezek 13:19; 33:24; 34:2-3,8-10; Micah 3:5,11; Mal 1:10; etc., etc.).
 3. Jesus condemned Pharisees for using prayer to take devour widows (Matt 23:14).
 4. One of the key qualities or traits of a pastor is an indifference to money (I Tim 3:3).
 5. Paul was perfect, coveting no man's money and paying his own way (Act 20:33-35).
 6. They were like Eli's sons and Samuel son's in their sins (I Sam 2:12-17,22,29; 8:3).
2. The prophets were ignorant of God's law, of dangers and threats, and of their flocks.
 1. A shepherd to be successful must be very vigilant as Solomon warned (Pr 27:23-27).
 2. They cannot understand by refusing the work to get it (I Tim 4:13-16; II Tim 2:15).
 3. To acquire wisdom requires avoiding earthly distractions (Prov 18:1; II Tim 2:3-4).
 4. But these men had taken on the work of shepherds with regard only for their benefit.
 5. One of the key qualities or traits of a pastor is an insatiable desire to study and learn.
 6. The only way understanding can occur for an uninspired pastor is very much study.

12 Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

1. These lazy, pampered fools could only think of taking their ease and ignoring the flock.
 1. Some Catholic priests have lived this way in the cloistered folly of rectory living.
 2. Charles Chiniquy describes the life in his book, Fifty Years in the Church of Rome.
 3. Professionals sometimes call the ministry the nonprofit profession for these reasons.
2. God described and condemned this pastoral compromise and lasciviousness elsewhere.
 1. Ezekiel condemned them in his blast against the nation (Ezekiel 22:25-28; 34:1-10).
 2. Micah condemned priests working for hire and connected judgment (Mic 3:11-12).
 3. Jesus blasted the Pharisees, a conservative sect, for devouring widows (Matt 23:14).