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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 56.

(2015)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man. As to such I neither claim special knowledge or perfect understanding.

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Isaiah 56.

Topics.

- Keep the Sabbath, for soon my salvation and deliverance will be revealed.
- God will give foreigners who join themselves to the LORD an everlasting name.
- God declares, "I will gather others besides those already gathered."
- The shepherds are blind dogs who have turned to their own way and gain.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).
3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22). The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

Keep the Sabbath, for soon My Salvation and Deliverance will be Revealed.

Isaiah 56:1-2 ----- ¹Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. ²Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

As soon as the LORD'S salvation comes and His deliverance is revealed applies to the following two events: -

1. Israel's deliverance from their seventy years in captivity to Babylon, Isaiah's primary focus in the last few chapters has been upon Israel's seventy years captivity in Babylon and Cyrus setting them free. The following verses of the prophet Isaiah show that God not only called Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) His anointed shepherd and called him by name, but also show that God said He would equip Cyrus and take him by the right hand and go before him. They picture God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations.

- The LORD says of Cyrus, "*He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfil all my purpose,*" saying of Jerusalem, "*She shall be built,*" and of the temple, "*Your foundation shall be laid.*" (Isaiah 44:28).
- Thus says the LORD to *his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped*, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1).
- *I (the LORD) will go before you (Cyrus king of Persia) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron,* ³*I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you (Cyrus) by your name.* ⁴*For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you,* though you do not know me. (Isaiah 45:2-3).
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me,* ⁶*that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other.* (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus)* and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: '*Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.*'" (Isaiah 45:14).

At this time Isaiah is speaking to the Jewish captives in Babylon who Cyrus is about to set free.

2. Isaiah's message also transcends the era of Babylon and Cyrus and reaches forward to God's salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this scenario the expression, "My salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed," refers to Jesus birth, his water baptism and his ministry.

Justice and righteousness: as one travels through the Scriptures it becomes clear that the pillars of God's throne and the foundation of it and of His Kingdom are: -

- Love and holiness.
- Righteousness (meaning doing what is right and good).
- Justice and mercy.
- Grace and longsuffering.
- Joy and peace.

These pillars embrace honesty, moral virtue, integrity truthfulness, fairness for all and kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22). These are the foundation and pillars of God's throne which means that all who belong to His Kingdom should do all they can to make them the foundation and pillars of their life. (Psalm 89:14) (Psalm 97:2).

Here Isaiah is saying that all who belong to God's Kingdom should always live their lives according to the law of justice and righteousness and avoid every form of evil and keep from any practice that brings dishonor to God and a bad testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the man who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it: (v2) for those who use this verse and verse four and six today to support the law of the Sabbath and make it compulsory for their followers to strictly keep the Saturday Sabbath (the true Sabbath Day) or teach their followers that if they do not strictly adhere to Sunday as their Sabbath that they are breaking God's Law are stretching what Isaiah is saying far beyond its boundaries and limitations.

The following two things should be kept in mind when reading this: -

- 1 At this time Israel was living under the Old Testament Covenant of Law and as such was bound by law to keep the Sabbath.
- 2 The Sabbath was given to the Old Testament nation of Israel and not New Testament Christians.
 - The LORD said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths (Exod. 31:12-13).
 - The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. (Exod. 31:16).

The Lord Jesus Christ has established a New Covenant whereby a sinner is saved by grace and not the works of the Law or self-effort. Nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus or the apostles command Christians to keep the Sabbath Day, but they do encourage the keeping of the other nine commandments because the Spirit underlying these commandments is love.

They are all about loving God and protecting the innocent from harm. Jesus summed all the commandments concerning our behavior toward others in the words, "Loving your neighbor as yourself," (Matt. 22:39) meaning do good and not harm to others.

Each of the six commandments concerning mankind protect another human from hurt and harm physically, financially, emotionally, sexually, verbally and spiritually showing that love is the Spirit underpinning the Ten Commandments. The principal Jesus, the apostles and Paul teach concerning holy days is to let each person be convinced in his or her own mind.

- One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in their own mind. ⁶The one who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Rom. 14:5-6).

The brother and sister who is convinced in their own minds that it is right and proper to keep Saturday, Sunday or any day of the week as the Sabbath do right before God and should not judge each other since each group is acting in faith and being true to their own conscience before the Lord. God accepts all three groups providing they are not keeping the day, because of a legal requirement of the law, or trusting in their keeping of it to be saved, but are acting in honest faith before God according to their own conscience.

NOTE: keeping Saturday or Sunday as a Sabbath Day today has nothing to do with salvation. It is simply a matter of conscience and convenience to the culture and nation one lives in and in many cases simply tradition. If all Christians around the world decided to gather together to worship on Wednesday to many people's surprise God would still be in the service.

The death penalty: those who do believe that Christians today are breaking God's law if they do not keep the Sabbath and from this mindset impose it upon their followers should also be teaching them the punishment for not keeping the Sabbath Day and working on the Sabbath day which was death.

- You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (Exod. 31:14).
- Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. (Exod. 31:15).
- On the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. (Exod. 35:2).

Surly the legalists today who believe that they are upholding God's law by strictly adhering to the Sabbath Day should also be keeping the whole law concerning the Sabbath Day. Imagine if Old Testament Israel stood before Moses and said, "We accept part of the law concerning the Sabbath Day, but we will not accept the punishments attached to it.

I suspect Moses would say, "You must accept the whole law and not just the parts that suit you." Those who do believe they have to keep the Sabbath Day to be saved are by their actions not only denying what the Lord achieved for them on the bloodstained cross of Calvary, but are also making his death count for nothing.

For further information on the Sabbath Day see the title: -

- The Sabbath Day in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

God will give Foreigners who join themselves to the LORD an Everlasting Name.

Isaiah 56:3-5 ----- ³Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." ⁴For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ⁵I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

I am a dry tree: (v3) presents a picture of a tree lacking life growing amongst a forest of healthy cedar trees, the sense is of a foreigner accepting the LORD and doing the things that please Him and holding fast to His covenant, but feeling they are spiritually barren of life, because they dwell amongst the people of Israel who have for hundreds of generations past not only known the LORD, but been chosen as His unique nation.

God in these verses is saying that this attitude is unfounded, because it matters not what nation a person is from if they accept Him and His ways He will accept them into His House and exalt them above natural born sons and daughters of Israel. This is because it is not the natural born seed of Israel that are the true House of Israel, but those of the promise, (meaning those of faith).

- Not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named. (Rom. 9:7).

The principal being taught in these verses is that even if a person is born of the bloodline of Abraham, born a Hebrew or Jew or of any other nation or is a king or pauper; a noble or lowly; rich or poor; white or black; male or female; live in a great mansion or on the street. God accepts whoever loves Him and lives a life that brings a good report to His Name and who does not harm others. It is teaching that God's love is the same for a newly born believer as it is for those who have matured in the faith.

God declares, "I will Gather Others besides those Already Gathered."

Isaiah 56:6-8 ----- ⁶"And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." ⁸The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, "I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered."

Zion comes from the Hebrew word (*Tsiyown*) and refers to the mountain the city of Jerusalem is built upon. It carries the idea of a permanent capital mountain of Jerusalem in the sense that it is readily seen and easily visible and noticed as an important sign (i.e., a significant and historic sign and guiding pillar). It is called God's Holy Mountain because Jerusalem God's Holy City sits on it.

Though Mount Zion is not distinguished for its elevation or grandeur and though it had nothing in itself to claim attention or to excite wonder, it was the most exalted and honoured above all mountains because it was selected as the place where God was to be worshipped and the place where God's city and God's temple is built and God's worship was established.

Even though Mount Sinai had all the awesome glory of the Almighty God descend upon it and the law came from there, Mount Zion excels in excellence over it. This is because from Mount Zion came the Messiah the Christ attended by a multitude of angels celebrating his birth and on Mount Zion the Messiah the Christ came into his own temple as Malachi in the following verse prophesied he would.

- Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 3:1).

Added to all this royal glory, multitudes of angels ministered to the Lord in his temptation, at his resurrection and accompanied him in his ascension all from Mount Zion.

- Mount Sinai is the mountain of the Old Covenant of Law in contrast Mount Zion is the mountain of the New Covenant of Grace.
- Mount Sinai's glory of the law pales when stood before Mount Zion's grace and Christ's death and resurrection upon it.

Neither Mount Sinai nor Mount Zion can glory and boast in themselves for the following reasons. Mount Sinai is not famous or respected as a holy mountain and a mountain of God because of any majesty of itself, but because it was upon this mountain God descended and gave the Ten Commandments. It is this awesome and holy event that exalts Mount Sinai and not the mountain itself.

Likewise Mount Zion has no fame or glory of itself, its glory comes from being the honoured mountain God chose to build His Holy city upon and is the mountain that the Messiah the Christ the Saviour of the world died and rose again from. The real strength is not in Mount Zion itself, but in the LORD who is the head of the thousands of chariots and the heavenly host surrounding it and as such is the protector of his chosen dwelling-place.

Zion is sometimes used as an ancient name for Jerusalem itself and because it is often used in poetic and prophetic passages it can refer to:-

- The hill the city of Jerusalem is built on.
- The city of Jerusalem.
- The temple and by extension Judah and the people of God.

These verses of Isaiah embrace two historic events the second one being far more majestic and widespread than the first.

- 1 The LORD'S statement, "Everyone who loves Him and does not bring shame to His name He will bring to His Holy Mountain refers to the Jewish captives. God used Cyrus the king of Persia who He called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon and give the people of Israel held in captivity written permission to return to their beloved city Jerusalem, built on Mount Zion. The people and their families triumphantly returned to Zion with great joy after their seventy years in Babylon captivity.
- 2 Isaiah's prophetic words, "my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples; the LORD will gather the outcasts of Israel and others to him," echo the Lord Jesus Christ gathering the lost sheep of the House of Israel and gathering Gentiles of all nations to Himself. In this context the statement, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples," refers not to the literal temple of God at Jerusalem, but to the faithful global church.

At this present time God's House is not a building of bricks and mortar, but a temple made not by human hands, but by the Spirit of God. The bricks of this temple are those who by faith trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for their righteousness and salvation. The mortar that holds the temple together, is love, love for God and for Christ and love for those who belong to his global family.

Everyone who keeps the Sabbath I will bring to my holy mountain: (v6) for information concerning the Sabbath Day, see the title, "Blessed is the man who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it," following (v1-2) (above).

The Shepherds are Blind Dogs who have turned to their Own Way and Gain.

Isaiah 56:9-12 ----- ⁹All you beasts of the field, come to devour—all you beasts in the forest. ¹⁰His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs (dumb dogs in KJV); they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. ¹¹The dogs have a mighty appetite (are greedy dogs in KJV); they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. ¹²"Come," they say, "let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure."

The dogs in the context of these verses are not tame domestic dogs we have as pets, but wild dogs. The, blind, dumb, lazy, greedy selfish, drunken false shepherds are likened to these wild dogs because wild dogs have a social hierarchy and are extremely efficient carnivores whose hunted prey rarely escapes. When wild dogs capture their prey they tear the flesh of their victim until it falls and then consume it even if it is still alive, such is the nature of these corrupt and self-serving religious leader of Israel.

Isaiah has been seeing visions and speaking prophetic words of future events yet to come to pass, but now his focus is back on the present moment, prior to the Babylonian captivity. The beasts of the field refer to Israel's enemies and especially the armies of Babylon. They are likened to beasts of the forest because they devour their prey and lay waste their cities and their land.

God through Isaiah is calling the Babylonian armies to come and destroy His people. This is because Israel's watchmen and shepherds are so corrupt that they are likened to blind dogs with an excessive appetite and no understanding. They are excessively greedy for gain and are never satisfied. Israel's religious leaders have turned to their own way for the purpose of acquiring financial wealth and

material possessions and to gain human praise for being a notable, important or famous person. They are ruled by extreme pride and their sole motivation for being in the position they are in is to be a great superstar and gain the accolade of multitudes. Instead of leading the people of Israel to God they have lead them to destruction.

The history of Israel and Assyria and Judah and Babylon.

God sent prophet after prophet to warn Judah and Israel of impending doom if they did not change their wicked ways, but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets (Zech. 7:12). The LORD through the faithful prophets told them to surrender themselves to the King of Babylon and God would nurture them while in Babylonian captivity and deliver them.

But they continued to rebel against the word of the LORD and turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The curses of the covenant are found in (Deut. 28:15-68) and the blessing of the covenant in (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.). Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to the Empire of Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. They were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years.

Archaeologists have found that at this time all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed and that the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon was brought to an end. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated. Many of the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist, but the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed.

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

End.