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

Isaiah 58.

(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 58.

Topics.

- In your fast you seek your own pleasure and oppress your workers.
- Your fast is vanity before the LORD; your prayers will not be heard on high.
- The fast God chooses and the fast that He delights in.
- If you forsake wickedness, you shall call and the LORD will answer.
- Your ruins shall be rebuilt; the foundations of generations raised up.
- If you keep the Sabbath on my holy day, you will delight in the LORD.

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.

In Your Fast You Seek Your Own Pleasure and Oppress Your Workers.

Isaiah 58:1-3 ----- ¹"Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. ²Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. ³"Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?" Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

Ponder for a moment, how would you feel if you were in a church and the LORD told a prophet to publically proclaim all the sins of the congregation (including yours) without hiding anything before the congregation? This is what the LORD is telling Isaiah to do. He naturally obeys and throughout this chapter openly proclaims to all Israel the sins of the nation. The people of Israel are in full blown sin before God and yet they seek Him daily as if they were a righteous nation. They delight to do the outward religious deeds, but their daily life is full of transgression (v1).

They are like those who dress themselves in religious garments and pomp and strictly attend church every Sunday and adhere to ceremonial rites and holy days and keep every religious custom and tradition, but every other day give God no thought and do as they please utterly devoid of how their behaviour and speech reflects on the honour of God and the good name of Jesus. Though Israel did and lived as they pleased, they believed they were righteous and had not forsaken the laws of God, because they adhered to the outward religious practises of Israel.

They delight to draw near to God: (v2), but only on their terms, they were happy to keep their outward religious customs, providing they could live as they pleased. It is interesting to notice that most cults are heavily laden with ritual and outward religious practises and as long as their followers adhere to these practises they believe they are made righteous regardless of what they say or how they live their lives.

Why have we fasted, and you see it not? (v3) not only are they adhering to their outward religious practises, but they are also putting on sackcloth and fasting, yet their nation is suffering great miseries and they ask God why, when they are doing their religious duties and fasting. In answer to this question, the LORD tells them He does not answer their prayers, because all their outward religious deeds are vanity (a waste of time), because during their daily lives they are seeking their own pleasure and oppressing their workers.

NOTICE: the primary two sins Israel is accused of is, seeking their own pleasure and oppressing workers. They no doubt are oppressing their workers so they can have more wealth to spend on their own indulgent pleasures and luxurious lifestyles.

Your Fast is Vanity before the LORD; Your Prayers will Not Be Heard on High.

Isaiah 58:4-5 ----- ⁴Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. ⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself (afflict his soul in the KJV). Is it to bow down his head like a reed (bulrush in KJV), and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?

Israel is quarrelling and fighting (probably over matters of the law and doctrine) during their fasting. God is more interested in the fruits of the Spirit, love, kindness, mercy, humbleness, grace etc., than fighting and arguing over details of doctrine and matters of the law.

The King James Bible uses the word affliction rather than humble which is a better translation in this context since God does require His people to humble themselves, and does not require them to afflict themselves by lashing or beating the body to inflict it with pain which was a common practise amongst those that were religious, even today some Catholics in some countries still inflict pain on their bodies as a form of doing penitence (i.e., repentance and atonement).

God is telling Israel that walking around in sackcloth and looking miserable is not the type of fasting that will get their prayers heard, just because they are doing outward religious acts and keeping religious ceremonial rites does not mean God will hear their prayers when they fast.

The Fast God chooses and the Fast that He Delights In.

Isaiah 58:6-7 ----- ⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Though Isaiah is speaking to Israel the principle applies to everyone who fast and desire to pray to the LORD. The LORD says simply going without food is not the kind of fasting that He delights in or that will get a person's prayers answered.

The fast God delights in and that He loves is for His people to: -

- Be humble and turn from wickedness.
- Release those in bondage and let the oppressed go free.
- Clothe the poor, feed the hungry and give the homeless shelter.
- Remain in contact with their own family and support each other.
- Not to idly gossip or point the finger (condemn others) or speak wickedness.
- Not to live solely to themselves and seek their own pleasure.
- To delight in the things of the LORD and not profane His name.

If you Forsake Wickedness, You shall Call and the LORD will Answer.

Isaiah 58:8-9 ----- ⁸Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

These verses clearly show that it matters not how rigidly God's people adhere to outward religious practises or how long they may fast if they continue in wickedness it all counts for nothing. In contrast to this if they do turn from their wicked ways not only will God's blessing, favour and His protection will be toward them, but He will also hear and answer their prayers.

Your Ruins shall be Rebuilt; the Foundations of Generations Raised Up.

Isaiah 58:10-12 ----- ¹⁰If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. ¹¹And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. ¹²And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.

Breach: the word breach comes from the Hebrew word (*perets*) it literally means a break (literal or figurative), in this context it carries the idea of the covenant being broken by Israel's spiritual adultery with idols and foreign gods and their gross wickedness. To repair the breach means to repair the broken relationship between Israel and God.

If Israel does the right thing and cares for the hungry and helps the suffering, then the LORD will not only guide, prosper and satisfy them, but will also make it possible for them to rebuild the foundations of the ancient ruins, referring to the rebuilding of Jerusalem; the Temple of God; the establishing of their true faith and the covenant they made with God. This is exactly what happened at the end of their seventy year captivity to Babylon.

God used Cyrus the king of Media Persia to bring the Empire of Babylon to ruin and set the people of Israel free from the bondage and captivity of Babylon. 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, ³I 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.* ⁴For 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*, ⁶that 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).

After conquering the mighty Empire of Babylon Cyrus gave Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God. 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.

But, contained within these verses is an echo of a future King who the LORD also called His anointed shepherd and his name is not Cyrus, but the Lord Jesus Christ, in who God at this present time is also repairing the broken relationship (i.e., the breach), between Israel and the Gentiles and raising up the ancient ruins not built of stones and mortar by the hands of man, but by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God.

God is building a spiritual temple in the heart and mind of all the faithful who trust in Christ for their righteousness and in God's grace. This temple is a temple made up of Jews and Gentiles (also called a new nation in Christ, a new creation in Christ, the church and the Kingdom of Christ). For further information concerning the spiritual temple God is building in Christ at this present time, see the title: "The Commonwealth of Israel" (at end of this Chapter).

However the LORD'S statement, "Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in," (v12), better fit the return of the LORD Jesus Christ in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign.

The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in this first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth.

Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish.

The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce (Isaiah 65:17-25). All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states: -

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

The great prophet Isaiah wrote: -

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

Truly the LORD'S statement, "Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in," (v12), will be perfectly and completely fulfilled when these events come to pass.

It should be noted: that as glorious as Christ's millennial reign will be it is not the final stage of God's eternal plan for mankind's salvation that he planned and purposed in His eternal mind before the world began.

At the end of Christ's millennial reign God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its eternal perfect fullness and majestic royal glory.

Throughout these verses we see that the following two things are truly important to God's heart: -

1. Taking care of those that are less fortunate.
2. Not oppressing others for one's own gain and pleasure.

The Sabbath Day

If You Keep the Sabbath on My Holy Day, You will delight in the LORD.

Isaiah 58:13-17 ----- ¹³"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; ¹⁴then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ¹⁵'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶'So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' ¹⁷"It is a sign between me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed."

Some in the Christian faith use these verses to support their belief that all Christians should be worshipping on Saturday, but to use these verses 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, "Love 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 for 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 Jesus achieved for them on the bloodstained cross of Calvary, but are also making his death count for nothing.

Judging one another: the principal Jesus and the apostles taught concerning judging those who do keep Saturday or Sunday as the Sabbath Day is laid out in the following verses: -

- Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand ⁵One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord (Rom. 14:4-6).

Now go to verse ten: -

- Why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. (Rom. 14:10).

The brother and sister who are convicted in their own minds to keep the Saturday as the Sabbath, do right before God, but should not judge others who are equally convicted in their own minds that it is right to keep the Sunday as the day they put aside for the LORD. The brother and sister who are convicted in their own minds to keep Sunday as their Sabbath, do right before God, but should not judge others who are equally convicted in their own minds, that it is right to keep Saturday as the day they put aside for the LORD.

Both groups are acting in faith and being true to their own conscience before God. God accepts both groups providing they are not keeping the day, because of the law or as an act of legal requirement to be saved, but are simply keeping it as an act of in faith before God.

For further information see the title: -

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

End.