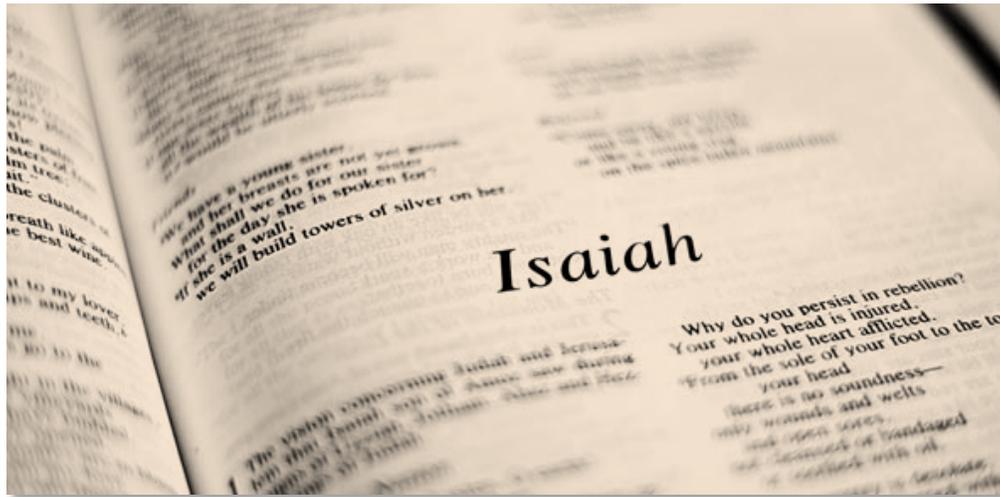


THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

TO WORSHIP AND GLORIFY GOD: ISAIAH 66



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

To Worship and Glorify God
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The Fellowship of Ailbe
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Introduction to *Isaiah 66*

The book of Isaiah ends as it began, with God challenging and rejecting the superficial worship of His people (chapter 1) and holding out to them the promise of a great salvation, encompassing all nations and people (chapter 4).

In Isaiah 66 those themes are repeated and intertwined. God reminds His people why they must fall under judgment, and be carried away captive to Babylon. But He calls them to look to Him and His promises, so that, when the day of His great salvation arrives, they will be ready to declare His glory to the nations.

God is birthing a new thing in the world. All nations and peoples will worship and glorify God, for this is why we have been created. Worship and glory belong to the Lord, and, as we give it, we fulfill our reason for being, and find our fullest satisfaction and joy.

If you find these studies helpful, please drop me a line at tmmoore@ailb.org and let me know. We welcome suggestions and stories about how the Lord is using our resources to help you grow in your walk with and work for the Lord.

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1 Whom the Lord Seeks

Pray Psalm 50.14, 15.

“Offer to God thanksgiving,
And pay your vows to the Most High.
Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

Read Isaiah 66.1, 2.

Reflect.

1. What is God seeking above all from us?
2. How does God teach us to think about His greatness?

Meditate.

God did not want His people to lose sight of His greatness. He has made enormous promises to them in the preceding chapters. But they were getting ready to go into captivity to a great king, in a mighty empire; and it might be that the greatness of Babylon’s power and grandeur would cause them to lose sight of God, and thus to fail to render what they owe to Him.

God’s people needed a big vision of God, and God gave it to them – His throne, the heavens (הַשָּׁמַיִם, *ha shamayim*) – all the vast starry host that spreads throughout the cosmos and looms above the earth (v. 1). I think this translation is better than *heaven* (NKJV) because God’s people could not see that unseen dimension. They could look nightly upon the stars and remind themselves, “Our God rules above even these.” God is beyond the heavens, even though – as we continue to discover – their host numbers in the billions of billions. He rules above them, so that even the stars and galaxies obey His will and perform His Word.

The earth is His footstool, where He is pleased to rest His feet, to stop, to stay, to linger. He is with us from beyond the heavens, and He is resting on and among us (v. 1). The earth and everything in it is for the pleasure of God, and He does as He wills with it, according to all His Word.

His people would lament the loss of the temple in Jerusalem. But they should not long grieve for it, since not even Solomon’s splendid temple was sufficient as a resting place for God (v. 1). God allowed that temple to be built; and He allowed it to go out of existence (v. 2). Buildings, sacrifices, priests, feast days – these are not what God is seeking (cf. Ps. 50).

God seeks something other than the outward trappings of religion. He is seeking people who understand their spiritual poverty and come contritely before Him – people who tremble at His Word, both because they understand the consequences of disobeying it, and because they thrill at the prospect of realizing all the Lord promises there (v. 2). God sets His eye (*look*, NKJV, is too weak) on such people – to watch over them, surround them with favor, grant them strength, give them His Spirit, and bring the promises of His Word to fruition in and for and through them.

God’s people were about to lose everything they cherished. They must learn to cherish what God does, and to seek it in themselves and in one another: contrite, trembling, expectant hearts unto the Lord. For in so doing, they would know His presence resting with them, and realize that He was beginning His new creation, even as they went into captivity in Babylon.

Reflect.

1. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to have a contrite heart? How can we maintain such a heart before the Lord?
2. Would you say that you *tremble* at God's Word in the way He is seeking? Explain.
3. Why are the inward facets and dynamics of religion more important to God than the outward?

If you are not "humble and peaceful," the grace of the Holy Spirit cannot live within you, if you do not receive the divine words with fear. For the Holy Spirit departs from the proud and stubborn and false soul. Therefore, you ought first to meditate on the law of God that, if perhaps your deeds are intemperate and your habits disordered, the law of God may correct you and reform you. Origen (185-354 AD), Homilies on Leviticus 6.2.5

Create in me a clean and contrite heart, O God, so that I might...

Pray Psalm 50.

God calls us to worship Him, and this psalm tells us what He is looking for when we come before Him. Pray the psalm slowly and reflectively, and let the Spirit speak to you about the heart of worship God seeks.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 50 (*Austrian Hymn: Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*)

God, the Lord, the mighty Savior, summons all from east to west:
Out of Zion, rich with favor, shines He, of all things the best.
Come, O God, and keep not silence; fire devours before Your way!
He His Church, steeped in defiance, comes to judge this awful day.

"Gather now My children holy, those bound close to Me by blood."
Let the heav'ns declare His glory, for the Lord Himself is Judge:
"Hear, My people, I will charge you; I alone am God, your God!
I will bring a solemn charge to gain you to Me for your good.

"Not for rituals I accuse you – let your worship to Me rise.
Naught to Me is any use, Who dwells in glory in the skies.
All is mine throughout creation; I your help do not require.
Offer Me no vain oblation: hear what I from you desire:

"Sacrifice of thanks now render; pay to God your solemn vows;
Let the troubled, each offender, seek Him in the midst of woes.
In the day of strife draw near Him; He will hear, and He will save.
Honor God, rejoice, and fear Him, give to Him your grateful praise.

"All of you My Word despising, who are you to claim My grace?
Praise may from your lips be rising, but you scorn Me to My face.
You approve of all transgressions, scheme against your mother's son!
I will crush your vain aggressions and destroy what you have done.

"Reckon this, My sinful people, lest My wrath consume you whole:
None shall thwart Me when I seek to crush and break your sin-stiff soul.
He who thanks to Me addressing, follows after what is good,
He shall know the way of blessing coming from the hand of God."

2 Empty Worship

Pray Psalm 145.1-3.

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable.

Read Isaiah 66.3, 4.

Reflect.

1. How does God describe the worship of His people in these verses?
2. Though they “worshiped”, what was the nature of their true relationship with God?

Meditate.

As we see in Psalm 50, God is not pleased with worship that merely goes through the motions without engaging a heart of gratitude, and a renewing of our vows to the Lord in all areas of daily life. But this is precisely where the people of Isaiah’s day were – religious, but without God.

The book of Isaiah ends where it began, with God rebuking His people for their empty worship. They offered their sacrifices with no more heart and devotion than if they were slaughtering an animal to eat (v. 3). Their grain offerings were as contaminated with insincerity and unbelief as if they were offering the blood of a pig to the Lord (v. 3). When they came to burn incense, they made the burning of incense an end in itself, rather than a vehicle preparing the way for their prayers (cf. Ps. 141.1, 2). Thus, the burning of incense became an idol to them.

And they loved this vain and empty worship! What God looked upon with disgust, and as an abomination, they delighted in (v. 3). There was no heart in the worship of God’s people. He was calling to them, seeking them, that they might worship Him truly; but they were so happy about their “worship” that they kept on doing what they were doing, without hearing the Lord or following the pattern of sound worship that begins with loving Him with all our hearts (v. 3).

They worshiped with empty worship, all the while fearing the worst because of the menacing words of prophets like Isaiah. If they had really listened to the Lord, they would have accepted His judgment without fear, and gone into captivity, seeing this as part of God’s work of a new creation, eagerly looking forward to the unfolding of each stage of that great project, and devoting themselves to what God required specifically of them in Babylon.

But they did not. Their worship was empty and evil to the Lord, and He gave them over to the thing they feared. If worship is just an arena for us to delight ourselves, doing what makes us happy or gives us a little thrill, but it’s not the worship God requires, then God will not delight in it, because it’s only empty idolatry.

What captivity awaits us, as we pursue forms of worship that we enjoy, but which do not delight the Lord?

Prepare.

1. How can we know if our worship, and that of our church, is pleasing to the Lord, or just something we like to do?

2. If the Lord were to lead His Church into captivity in our day, what form might that take?
3. God calls and speaks to us continually. What is our responsibility when it comes to hearing and answering Him?

For they did not act as was right, neither was their zeal according to law, but they rather sought their own pleasure in such days, as the prophet accuses them, beating down their bondsmen and gathering themselves together for strifes and quarrels, and they struck the lowly with the fist and did all things that tended to their own gratification. Athanasius (295-373AD), Festal Letters 19.2

Is my worship what it ought to be, Lord? Or am I just going through the motions, entertaining and deceiving myself? Help me today to...

Pray Psalm 145.

True worship begins in praise. Let this psalm lead you through the mighty acts and glorious works of God, and to praise Him for Who He is as well as what He does. Commit yourself afresh to this great and glorious God for the day ahead.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 145 (*Brother James' Air: The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*)

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

To ev'ry generation we Your wondrous works shall tell.
The splendor of Your majesty we contemplate full well.
We speak of all Your mighty deeds and all Your greatness tell!

Then shall we all the glorious fame of Your great goodness sing –
Your righteousness, Your gracious Name, Your mercy: praise we bring!
Your steadfast love remains the same, mercy our covering.

Your works shall thank You; all Your saints shall bless and praise You, Lord.
Your reign we bless without restraint; Your power fills our words.
Our children we shall educate in all Your splendor, Lord.

Your Kingdom evermore shall be; You reign forever, Lord!
Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.
The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

The eyes of all look up to You to meet our needs each day.
Open Your hand, provide the food we need, O Lord, we pray!
Kindness and righteousness You do, O Lord, in every way!

Be near to all who call on You; all those who fear You, bless.
Preserve all those whose love is true; save us in our distress.
Our mouths will speak with praise of You; Your holy Name we'll bless!

3 The Time of Delivery

Pray Psalm 26.1-3.

Vindicate me, O LORD,
For I have walked in my integrity.
I have also trusted in the LORD;
I shall not slip.
Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my mind and my heart.
For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,
And I have walked in Your truth.

Read Isaiah 66.5-13.

Reflect.

1. To whom are these verses addressed?
2. Whose childbirth does this passage have in view?

Meditate.

The Lord knew that, among those unrepentant people soon to be trooped off to Babylon, a remnant of faithful believers could be found. It is to them these words of comfort and promise are addressed. They are the ones who trembled at His Word (v. 5, cf. v. 2) – both with fear for God’s judgment, and eager hope for His promises.

The people of Judah and Jerusalem despised the faithful remnant. They mocked their prophets, put the faithful out of the synagogues, and taunted them to glorify their God and rejoice, and thus show their true faith (v. 5). This sounds a lot like what happened to believers during the time of Jesus and in the early days of the Christian movement. God’s faithful remnant should expect to know opposition, even among those who consider themselves true worshipers of God.

But God will repay the enemies of His people (v. 6). How will He do that? By bringing a male Child, by means of an unusual birth, such as no one had ever heard of before (vv. 7, 8; cf. Is. 7.14).

Verses 7-13 are difficult, because it’s not immediately clear who is giving birth and who is being born. Revelation 12.1-6 picks up on Isaiah’s language (“male Child”) and so clarifies God’s meaning in our verses. Christ is the male Child Who delivers God’s remnant and destroys their enemies. John shows us how to think about verses 9-13, when it seems that more children are being born to this woman. He mentions “the rest of her offspring” and thus makes the woman to represent three things at once: She is mother of the Christ, consummator of the promise of Israel, and the Church as the mother of all believers (Rev. 12.5, 1, 17). The big difference between John’s account and God’s Word through Isaiah is that, in Isaiah 66.7 the birth of Christ is painless, whereas John has Mary crying out in pain in Revelation 12.1, 2. But, as Paul reminds us, all who are born among the offspring of the Church must enter the Kingdom of God through many trials (Acts 14.23). There is always pain involved in being born into the true remnant of God’s people.

Zion is in labor and giving birth in verses 8-11. Here, Zion stands for the faithful remnant (cf. Ps. 48.1-3). God has promised that she will deliver many children – a promise that goes all the way back to Abraham (Gen. 12.1-3). It takes time to get to that point, but once the fullness of the time for delivery comes, God’s promise will not fail (cf. Gal. 4.4-6). Zion will delight in her children, and nurture them into “the abundance of her glory” (v. 11).

And God Himself will cause His peace to abound for His all-inclusive remnant (vv. 12, 13). His people shall feed and grow and rejoice and know the comfort of the Lord, present with them in their midst.

Those faithful believers heading off the Babylon would cherish these words, think of them often, and live toward them – like Daniel and his friends – even as they endured the trial of captivity. And so, as if to fulfill the taunt of their enemies, they would show the glory of God, and would rejoice in Him, and thus prove themselves to be His true and faithful children.

Prepare.

1. In what ways is being born again like being born as a baby?
2. Why should God's faithful children expect opposition, even from those who consider themselves believers? How should they deal with that opposition?
3. Why is God's peace "like a river"? Is this your experience of His peace? Explain.

Zion therefore gave birth, that is, the remnant of Israel and the faith of the believing apostles gave birth to the male Lord and Savior, who was generated at once throughout the entire universe. No one has either heard or told his story or taught it to anyone, so that all the nations might come to believe in a very short time and that there might be formed one Christian people from all the various peoples. Jerome (347-420 AD), Commentary on Isaiah 18.23

I want my call and election to be sure, Lord – not just to me, but to all who know me; so today, help me to...

Pray Psalm 26.

This psalm leads us to hold fast to the Lord and our calling, even in the face of adversity. Let it guide you into the day ahead, trusting in the Lord and the promises of His Word.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 26 (*Aberystwyth: Jesus, Lover of My Soul*)

Vindicate me, Lord on high; I have walked within Your Word.
Never wav'ring, though I sigh, I have trusted You, O Lord!
Prove me, Lord, prove even me! Test my heart and try my mind.
Let Your steadfast mercy be in the path for me to find.

Men of falsehood will not sit in my presence, nor will I
suffer any hypocrite to find favor in my eye.
All the wicked I abhor; 'round Your altar let me stand,
loudly singing evermore of Your gracious, mighty hand.

Lord, I love Your dwelling-place, there where all Your glory shines,
Keep my soul before Your face, lest for sinful ways it pine.
As for me, in righteousness, I shall walk on level ground.
Save me, Lord, renew and bless! Let me with Your Church be found!

4 Your Heart Shall Rejoice

Pray Psalm 135.1-4.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the name of the LORD;

Praise *Him*, O you servants of the LORD!

You who stand in the house of the LORD,

In the courts of the house of our God,

Praise the LORD, for the LORD *is* good;

Sing praises to His name, for *it is* pleasant.

For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,

Israel for His special treasure.

Read Isaiah 66.14-17.

Reflect.

1. These verses describe a “now, and not yet” scenario. Explain.
2. Whom does God especially condemn?

Meditate.

This is one of many “now, and not yet” passages in the Scriptures. Those who “see” (v. 1) the promised salvation of the Lord *now*, if only in their minds and hearts, with the eye of faith, will indeed rejoice to see it. Those who realize it – “see” it – increasing in their lives *now*, will also rejoice, and flourish in the salvation of the Lord. And when at last we see Jesus face to face, and see the full beauty and splendor and power and glory and blessedness of our great salvation in Him, then we will rejoice and flourish as never before. This is the *not yet* of which we gain a foretaste in every *now* of our great salvation.

The coming of the salvation of the Lord – at every stage – brings the judgment of the Lord against the unbelieving world (cf. Rom. 1.18-32). The wrath of God is being revealed *now* against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth, deny the Lord, and choose the lie. But a great and irreversible day of judgment is *yet to come*, when God will eternally banish from before Him those who persist in enmity against Him (v. 15, 16).

And chief among those whom God will banish are people who go through the motions of religion, but without any real commitment to God (v. 17; cf. Matt. 7.21-23). They look like they know the Lord and want to worship and serve Him, but then they set aside His Law and “worship” Him according to their own ideas and what suits their purposes. All such people “shall be consumed together,” says the Lord.

Prepare.

1. How does God exercising His wrath against ungodliness and unrighteousness bring glory to His Name?
2. What does it mean to you to *see* the salvation of the Lord? How can you *see* more of it?
3. Why is God so insistent that we worship and serve Him *His* way, and not ours?

For it is not only in the present life that I provide consolation for you through my heralds, but also in the heavenly city I will fill you with manifold joys—granting you the resurrection from the dead. This is what he meant by comparing the growth of bones to the growth of a plant. Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD), Commentary on Isaiah 20.66.13-14

Lord, I want to see and enjoy more of Your great salvation now. Help me today to...

Pray Psalm 135

Use this psalm to praise God for His great salvation, and to repent of any idols that may yet be distracting you from Him.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 135 (*St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers*)

Praise the Savior, praise Him, for His Name is good.

Sing, for it is pleasant, to our glorious God!

All whom He has chosen and redeemed by grace,

praise His Name together, praise Him in this holy place!

Refrain v. 1

Praise the Name of Jesus, you who serve His Word!

Raise your voice and praise our good and glorious Lord!

Great and sovereign, Jesus rules o'er all above,

doing as He pleases, sovereign in His love.

Clouds and seas obey Him, lightning, too, and rain;

He the winds brings forth in pow'r and sends them back again.

Refrain

Egypt's firstborn fell to God's redeeming pow'r.

Kings and nations crumbled in redemption's hour.

He the land of promise to His people gave.

Thus His Kingdom Jesus gives to all He's pleased to save.

Refrain

Evermore Your Name, O Savior, shall endure!

Your renown throughout all ages is secure.

For You have compassion, vindicating all

those who serve Your Name and on Your saving mercy call.

Refrain

Vain the nations serve the idols of their hands;

mouths and ears they have but cannot understand.

Every idol vain is, lacking life or breath;

all who serve them, like them, shall be lost to lasting death.

Refrain

Bless the Lord you people, all who love the Lord!

Bless Him, you who trust His sovereign, holy Word!

Bless the Lord from Zion, Him Who in it dwells;

praise Him! Lift your voices, all His grace and glory tell!

Refrain

5 The Great Ingathering

Pray Psalm 33.1-5.

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD *is* right,
And all His work *is done* in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Read Isaiah 66.18-21.

Reflect.

1. What is the purpose of the great ingathering described here? What does that mean?
2. Who is gathering these nations? How are they gathered?

Meditate.

In these verses, the Lord foresees a day of great glory, in which the nations of the world will learn of the Lord's fame and see His glory (v. 19), and be gathered before Him into His City. Everything in the book of Isaiah has been pointing to this time. Let's have a closer look.

I want to suggest a more literal translation of verse 18: "For I *am* their works and their thoughts, coming in to gather all nations and all tongues; they shall come in and they shall see My glory." Some explanation: Most translations insert the verb *know* as understood at the opening of this verse. I see no justification for this. Typically, only state of being verbs (is, am, was, are, etc.) are omitted in Hebrew, and supplied, in italics, in English versions. To use *know* here changes the focus. God is not saying that He *knows* the works and thoughts of those who tremble at His Word (vv. 2, 5) and are born into His City (vv. 7-11), but that He *is* their works and thoughts. He occupies their minds and directs their works, as they think about and work for His coming to the nations (Matt. 6.10). The result of this is that the nations of the world see the glory of the Lord and come to Him. This echoes what we saw in Isaiah 2.1-4, so that, as in the previous verses (compared to chapter 1), the Lord is bringing Isaiah's words full circle again. Chapter 66 harks back to chapters 1 and 2, closing the loop of this book with firm warnings and glorious promises, in just the way the book began.

Verses 19 and 20 show the nations offering themselves to the Lord, because He has sent to them "those who escape" – from captivity to sin and death – and He has "set a sign among" the nations of the world – His people, scattered and declaring the glory of the Lord. The Church is the *sign* that the Kingdom promised in Isaiah 9.6, 7 has come to earth; and the Church is the *outpost* from which that Kingdom advances among and within the nations of the world.

God's people seek the Kingdom and proclaim His glory, and the nations respond by every means to come and offer themselves as clean vessels for the Lord (v. 20). And the Lord will take, from among all the nations, those who do the work which, in Isaiah's day, was reserved for priests and Levites – the work of leading people to God, teaching and nurturing them for lives of daily worship and service. In that great day, all God's people will be a royal priesthood unto Him (1 Pt. 2.9, 10)

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These are the times of deliverance, the times in which we live; and this is the vision that must guide our discipleship as we take up our cross and go wherever Jesus sends us, as signs and outposts of His Kingdom, to seek and save the lost (Jn. 20.21; Lk. 19.11).

Reflect.

1. What does it mean for you to be a sign and outpost of the Kingdom in your Personal Mission Field?
2. We are they who have escaped the power of sin, death, and the darkness of unbelief, and have been born again into the Kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1.13). What should we do to make sure God is all our thoughts and all our work in these times of deliverance?
3. Paul says we should declare the glory of God (Is. 66.19) in everything we do (1 Cor. 10.31). How can we prepare each day to help make sure this is how we actually live?

For like something consecrated to God, the host of the nations are given over to God's glory, released from all charges through faith and washed from all filth through holy baptism, like a guest's gift, as if given out of the apostolic fervor for God. On that account they rejoice, naming him their joy and crown. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD), Commentary on Isaiah 5.6.66.18-21

Lord, help me to be a sign and outpost of Your Kingdom today as I...

Pray Psalm 33.

Let this psalm lead you into deeper trust in God and His Word, and to give yourself in service to Him, for His glory, in everything you do.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 33 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the Lord, for praise becomes His righteous ones!
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.
His love prevails the whole world through; the Lord loves truth and righteousness.

God spoke and heaven came to be, and all its hosts His Spirit wrought.
He heaps the waters of the sea; the deeps their dwelling place are taught.

Let all below now fear the Lord; let all in awe of Him abide!
The worlds exist by Jesus' Word; let all on earth in Him confide.

He nullifies the nations' plans; forever stands His sov'reign Word.
All they are blessed who with Him stand – the chosen people of the Lord.

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.
Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

6 The Choice

Pray Psalm 92.1-4.

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning,
And Your faithfulness every night,
On an instrument of ten strings,
On the lute,
And on the harp,
With harmonious sound.
For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work;
I will triumph in the works of Your hands.*

Read Isaiah 66.22-24.

Reflect.

1. The peoples of the world are defined in terms of their relationship with God. How can you see that in these verses?
2. How would you describe the mood or tone of these verses?

Meditate.

Isaiah's book ends on the same note that it sang throughout – promise and warning. God is making a new heavens and new earth (v. 22), and those who dwell there with Him shall endure forever. Their primary occupation will be to worship God; however, as we have seen, this is not restricted to gatherings for worship, but describes lives devoted as living sacrifices to the Lord, worshipping Him in everything we do (cf. Rom. 12.1, 2).

This is the hope of all who hear and heed the Word of God, and who look to His promises and long for His salvation, even as they endure hardships or discipline from the Lord.

On the other hand, those who will not tremble at the Lord and His Word, but who continue to insist on their own way, transgress against the Lord (v. 24). They will be condemned to eternal misery. Dead in their trespasses and sins in this life, they will continue in death forever – the consequence of choosing to reject God's Word and promises, and to pursue their own means of salvation, rather than His.

Thus, God speaking through Isaiah leaves us with a choice: Choose life eternal with God, by trusting in His Word and worshipping Him, even in the hard times of life; or choose self and transgression against the Lord, and the consequences of eternal banishment from His Presence.

Everyone must know that only two paths are before us – that of obedience to God's Word, and blessing in His salvation; and that of rejecting God's grace and choosing to go our own way. The one leads to eternal life, and the other to eternal misery. Our duty, like Isaiah, is to walk the path of blessing, and to call others to join us on it.

Prepare.

1. The Good News of salvation includes hope and promises of life, but warnings of judgment and death as well. Explain.

2. Who are the descendants, and what is the name that God promises will remain before Him (v. 22)?
3. Why is transgression against the Lord such a terrible matter? Why should those who refuse to repent of their transgressions be consigned to eternal misery?

If heaven and earth are renewed, how can we doubt the possibility of our renewal, for whom heaven and earth were made? If the transgressor is kept for punishment, why should not the just person be preserved for glory? If the worm of sinners does not die, how shall the flesh of the just perish? For the resurrection, as the very form of the word indicates, is this: What has fallen shall rise again, what has died shall live again. Ambrose of Milan (333-397 AD), On His Brother Satyrus 2.87

Make me an agent of Your Good News, Lord, and help me to...

Pray Psalm 92.

As you pray this psalm, rejoice in the goodness of the Lord, both now and for eternity to come, which is ours through Jesus Christ.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 92 (*Sweet Hour: Sweet Hour of Prayer*)

How good it is to thank the Lord and praise to God Most High accord;
By day to let His kindness ring, His faithfulness by night to sing.
With ten-stringed lute, resounding lyre, and sweetest harp we'll lift You higher.
For You have made our souls rejoice; we sing Your praise with blended voice!

How sweet Your works, Your thoughts how deep: The fool cannot such knowledge keep.
Like grass the wicked rise each day; in judgment they are swept away.
But You, O Lord, abide on high; Your enemies shall fall and die.
All those who sin shall scattered be, but, Lord, You have exalted me!

My eye my vanquished foe shall see; my ears hear those who threaten me.
Yet in God's house, where he belongs, the righteous like a tree grows strong.
Then let us green and fruitful be and flourish like a mighty tree,
To tell God's righteousness abroad: He is our Rock, our sovereign God!

7 Let the LORD Be Glorified

Pray Psalm 98.1.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
For He has done marvelous things;
His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

Review Isaiah chapter 66.

Reflect.

1. Of what does God disapprove in this chapter, and throughout the book of Isaiah?
2. To whom does He hold out the promise of salvation and life?

Meditate.

Our study of the book of Isaiah comes to an end. God, we have seen, has precious and very great promises of salvation, life, and eternal blessedness for His faithful people. Even though they must undergo a time of discipline and testing, yet, by hoping in His Word, and remaining faithful to Him, they may know a measure of His joy even now.

Greater joy and salvation are yet to come, however. In the last days, and even beyond the last days, into the new heavens and new earth, those who tremble at God's Word, and are of a poor and contrite spirit, will live before Him in righteousness, peace, and joy. They will glorify Him, and, in so doing, will realize their reason for being, and know full and abundant life.

But those who are merely going through the motions of religion, mouthing their belief in God, without true repentance and a commitment to holiness, will be turned away by God in the last day. These will have no part in His Kingdom, but will be separated unto everlasting torment and misery.

God is birthing a new thing in the world. A new people, comprised of all the nations of the earth, who come before Him in worship, and go to their world to declare God's praises – they shall be the true people and servants of God, Who will abide with and glorify Him forever.

The words of Isaiah's prophecy, together with those of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, would have brought comfort, hope, and strength to the people who experienced captivity in Babylon for 70 years. They would have taught those faithful people to look back – at the faithfulness of God and the reliability of His Word – and forward – to the promises of last days glory, and a new heavens and new earth – and around at their lives – to live as His servants and City in the present, whatever may have been their circumstances.

God was sending His Servant to save and deliver His people, and they must hope in Him, and live toward the promise of His coming at all times. It's the same message that comes to us in this age in flight from God. The Servant, King Jesus, Who has redeemed and saved us, is coming to take us to be with Him forever, for the glory of God and our eternal blessing. Let us live each day toward that hope, rejoicing in the promises of our God.

Prepare.

1. What does it mean to “tremble” at God's Word (vv. 2, 5)? Why is this necessarily coupled with having a “poor and contrite spirit”?

To Worship and Glorify God: Isaiah 66

2. We must practice the outward forms of religion – worshiping God, praying, reading His Word, and so forth. But why are these not enough, by themselves, to bring us into the joy and pleasure of the Lord?

3. What's your primary takeaway from Isaiah 66?

Isaiah teaches that Jerusalem will not be destroyed root, branch and all. For when he foretold the complete captivity of Jerusalem, he mentioned those chosen to survive. For a not insignificant number will be saved, obviously through faith in Christ—and he wants to make this clear. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD), Commentary on Isaiah 5.6.66.7-9

Thank You, Lord, for the promise of salvation and life through Jesus. Help me to live more fully in, and more completely toward that promise today, as I...

Pray Psalm 98.

Rejoice in the great salvation of the Lord, and praise Him for His grace and truth.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 98 (*Duke Street: Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord*)

Come, let us sing unto the Lord new songs of praise with one accord!

Wonderful things our God has done: Jesus has our salvation won!

Now is God's saving mercy known; His glory to the world is shown.

Faithful and kind is God our Lord; earth has the Name of Jesus heard.

Raise to the Lord your loudest voice! Break forth and sing! Rejoice! Rejoice!

Praise, praise to You our God and King, with all our hearts and strength we bring!

Now let the whole creation 'round burst into song with joyous sound!

Jesus will come to judge the earth; let all proclaim His matchless worth!

To Worship and Glorify God: Isaiah 66

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Of what does God most strongly disapprove? Why?
2. How can we glorify God? Is God still calling us to proclaim His glory to the world? Where?
3. What's the most important lesson for you from Isaiah 66?
4. Do you think the book of Isaiah is still relevant in our day? Why?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from our study in the book of Isaiah? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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