

Isaiah Chapter 56

Verses 1-6

In contrast to His message of salvation to all who will repent, this chapter introduces God's message of condemnation to those who refuse to repent.

Thus, the "blessed" man is the one who turns away from "doing any evil."

The "sons of the stranger" refer to Gentiles who are willing to "love" and "serve" the Lord and thereby partake of His "covenant".

Isaiah 56:1 "Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation [is] near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed."

"Near to come ... revealed":

Incentives to comply (with 55:6-7), include the nearness of God's kingdom of salvation and righteousness (51:5).

This lesson begins by reminding the house of Israel to keep God's law.

This is speaking of the near future when Jesus Christ (their Messiah), will come to the earth as Savior.

He is everyone's salvation.

This is calling them to righteousness.

They will soon be delivered from Babylon, and then a very short time later, the true Deliverer comes.

He is the One who will deliver all mankind from sin and death.

Isaiah 56:2 "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."

"Keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it":

Sabbath observance, established after the deliverance from Egypt (Exod. 20:8-11), became a sign of fulfilling the covenant God made with Moses (Exod. 31:13-17).

In captivity, it is difficult to keep all of the sacrifices and ordinances.

In fact, it would be impossible.

They could, however, remember the Sabbath.

They might be forced to work on that day while they were in captivity, but they could keep it uppermost in their minds and hearts.

Since they are in captivity, they must set the best example of how God's people conduct themselves.

They must not give up their morals, even under these difficult circumstances.

Isaiah 56:3 "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."

“Stranger ... eunuch”:

Such individuals, excluded from Israel by the law (Exodus 12:43; Deut. 23:1, 3, 7-8), will find in the coming of the messianic kingdom the removal of such exclusions.

This is just explaining to them, they must not complain about their condition.

God had told them early on that this was caused by Him to get them to repent.

They are captives, they are (some of them) eunuchs, but they must realize it was because they had disobeyed God.

Whatever hardships came on them, they were of their own making.

The eunuchs and the foreigners, who had accepted Judaism, thought they would be cast off, when Israel went back to the homeland.

They thought of themselves as useless to God.

Verses 4-5:

“Take hold of my covenant ... everlasting name”:

Eunuchs with hearts inclined to comply with the Mosaic Covenant may anticipate an endless posterity.

It is never works that save (Romans 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9); rather, obeying God's law, doing what pleases Him or desiring to keep the promises of obedience are the evidences that one has been saved.

And will thus enjoy all salvation blessings.

Isaiah 56:4 "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;"

Even though they had served in the palace during their captivity, they would be acceptable to God, if they had kept the Sabbath in their hearts.

They are like everyone else.

They will be saved, because they have had faith and accepted the covenant of God.

Isaiah 56:5 "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."

We see in this that the house is speaking of the church.

The walls have to do with the holy city (New Jerusalem).

They will have a special place of remembrance.

Verses 6-7:

“Taketh hold of my covenant ... accepted upon mine altar”:

The sacrifices of a foreigner who loves God, whose heart is inclined to serve Him and obey the Mosaic Law, will find his sacrifices welcome, in the coming kingdom as well.

Isaiah 56:6 "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;"

The “stranger” is speaking of all the nations who were not physical Israel.

We studied earlier how there were more of them who accepted Jesus as their Savior, than there were of the natural Jew.

The secret is, they accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

The “covenant”, spoken of here, is the new covenant of grace.

Verses 7-12

The temple is called a “house of prayer for all people.”

This phrase was quoted by Jesus (Matt. 21:13), in His dispute with the money-changers.

The chapter ends with an indictment of the “watchmen” (or prophets), who are “blind ... ignorant ... dumb dogs”.

Isaiah 56:7 "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 a house of prayer for all people."

“My house ... for all people”:

In the kingdom of the Messiah, the Jerusalem temple will be the focal point for worship of the Lord by people of all ethnic backgrounds.

Jesus cited a violation of this anticipation by His contemporaries in His second cleansing of the temple: Jewish leaders had made the temple a commercial venture (Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

The covenant of the law had been just for the Hebrews.

The covenant of grace unto salvation is for all people of the world.

The temple was dedicated by Solomon, when he knelt before the altar, with both hands raised to God, palms upward.

We know that the temple in Jerusalem, like the tabernacle in the wilderness, was a place for the people to sacrifice to their God.

When Jesus fulfilled all the law with the sacrifice of His body on the cross, there was no need to sacrifice again.

Now, the sacrifice of the believer is praise and the house of God would be a house of prayer and praise, instead of sacrifice.

Isaiah 56:8 "The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather [others] to him, beside those that are gathered unto him."

“Others ... those that are gathered”:

Besides gathering Israel’s exiles into His kingdom, the Lord will bring in non-Jews also (49:6).

The Lord God, in the verse above, is Adonai Jehovah.

This is just saying that God will not only bring the physical house of Israel out of captivity to Him, but will also, call the heathen to Him.

Verses 9-12

Contain a commentary on Israel's false prophets and irresponsible leaders who led them astray.

Verses 9-11 "Beasts ... watchmen ... shepherds":

These titles identify the wicked; other prophets refer to Israel's enemies as beasts (Jer. 12:9; Ezek. 34:5, 8).

Prophets, who should have been watchmen and warned Israel to repent, ignored their responsibility (Ezek. 3:17).

Priests also failed to lead Israel in paths of righteousness (Ezek. 34:1-6; Zech. 11:15-17).

Isaiah 56:9 "All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, [yea], all ye beasts in the forest."

This is speaking of all of those who are opposed to God and His people.

They would like to destroy God's people.

Isaiah 56:10 "His watchmen [are] blind: they are all ignorant, they [are] all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber."

God's watchmen are the leaders of the temple, the teachers, even the prophets.

Isaiah says here, they are overcome with spiritual blindness.

Jesus said they had eyes to see, and could not see.

Their ignorance has to do with not understanding the Scriptures.

They should know (above everyone else), the Scriptures.

They are not aware that it is time to warn the people.

The Bible said, if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.

It is such a shame that the learned scholars of the Bible did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

They were so self-satisfied that they were as if they were sleeping.

Isaiah 56:11 "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."

One of the problems with the priest and High Priest (at the time of Jesus), was the fact that this sacred position had deteriorated to where they were buying the priesthood.

Jesus spoke harshly of them, and rightly so.

When he ran the money changers out of the temple, it was because the priesthood had gotten greedy and started selling sacrificial animals that were damaged.

I personally believe that some of them actually knew Jesus was the Messiah, but they were afraid of losing their control over the people.

They had changed the law of God so, Jesus called it "their" law.

They were not there to help others, but for self-gain.

They were actually angry when Jesus healed the sick.

They felt it made them look bad.

Isaiah 56:12 Come ye, [say they], I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, [and] much more abundant.

"Wine ... strong drink":

This is indicative of the self indulgent irresponsibility of the leaders.

Drunkenness completely obliterated any concern that leaders had for their people.

It appears that many of the people who were supposed to be the leaders were actually heavy drinkers.

What a terrible state for the leaders to be in!

Leaders, then or now, must set a high standard for God's people to follow.

Isaiah Chapter 56 Questions

1. Why in verse 1, are they told to keep His judgment and justice?
2. What is this saying to the house of Israel?

3. In captivity, it is difficult to keep all the _____ and _____.
4. How could they keep them?
5. What must they not give up, even though they are in captivity?
6. What must the children of Israel be careful not to do?
7. Why had God allowed them to go into captivity?
8. What did the eunuchs and the foreigners have in common?
9. How can the eunuchs be saved?
10. The house in verse 5, is speaking of what?
11. What is the holy city in verse 5?
12. Who are the strangers in verse 6?
13. What is the covenant mentioned in verse 6?
14. The covenant of the law is just for whom?
15. Describe how Solomon prayed in the temple?
16. Why is there no need to sacrifice any more?
17. What is the sacrifice of the believer?
18. What is the Lord God in verse 8, taken from?
19. Who are the beasts in verse 9?
20. Who are God's watchmen?
21. What does Isaiah think is wrong with them?
22. What does their ignorance have to do with?
23. What happens, if the blind lead the blind?
24. The learned scholars were so self-satisfied, it was as if they were _____.
25. What are the leaders called in verse 11?
26. What does the author personally believe about the leaders in the temple?
27. Why were they angry when Jesus healed the sick?

28 . Leaders, then or now, must set a _____ for God's people to follow.