

# The Prophets

Lesson #20

Isaiah 58:1-66:24

## Outline

### I. **Consolation (40:1-66:24)**

- A. The program of God for peace (58:1-66:24).
  1. The contrast between false and true worship (58:1-14).
  2. Confession of Israel's depravity (59:1-21).
  3. Glorious prosperity and peace of the redeemed (60:1-22).
  4. The Messiah's ministry of peace (61:1-11).
  5. The restoration and glorification of Israel (62:1-63:6).
  6. Confession of sins and an appeal for help (63:7-64:12).
  7. Judgment for idolators and blessings for the faithful (65:1-16).
  8. A new beginning for the penitent (65:17-25).
  9. The rebuke of hypocrisy (66:1-4).
  10. The coming of the Lord (66:5-17).
  11. All mankind will bow before the Lord (66:18-24).

## Notes

### **Isaiah 58:1-14**

- Cry out and spare not (58:1-2).
  - Isaiah is to cry without restraint and withhold nothing as he exposes the sins of the people.
  - The nation is guilty of the sin of formality and hypocrisy; the people sin against God and transgress His laws, yet they seek Him daily, professing to delight in the knowledge of His ways.
- Hypocritical formalism versus true fasting (58:3-12).
  - Fasting had been a part of the nation's life from its beginning; it was usually practiced out of a genuine sense of need and accompanied by weeping, confession of sins and prayer.
  - When a fast is in accord with God's requirements, then His blessing will break forth like the morning light and dispel the darkness through which the people have been passing.
- Proper observance of the Sabbath (58:13-14).
  - Had Isaiah's charge at this point been observed, it would not only have served his generation, but would have been a strong force holding the people together as one and binding them to the Lord during the exile.
  - The Sabbath was not only a rest day but also a holy day, a day for spiritual refreshing and fellowship with God.

- Faithful Israel will soar above the purely mundane and find delight in God and His ways.

### ***Isaiah 59:1-21***

- God's charge against the people (59:1-8).
  - What separates them from God, causing Him to hide His face from them, is their disregard for the covenant (their iniquities) and transgression of the law (their sins).
  - Lies and lack of moral integrity and of righteousness are bound to poison a society and ultimately bring it to death. As then, so now; for God's principles never change.
- A confession of wickedness (59:9-15).
  - There is no justice, no righting of the existing state of affairs; righteousness is never attained. They look for light, probably deliverance from the existing plight, but instead there is darkness.
  - Justice, or right judgment, is reversed; and righteousness stands beyond reach. When truth is not present, uprightness cannot enter.
- Vengeance and deliverance (59:16-21).
  - God was appalled, so to speak, by the spiritual desolation which He beheld; and He was shocked that no man acted as an intercessor, championed His cause or made contact with Him on behalf of the oppressed people.
  - In the conflict with injustice, transgression and sins, God assumes the role of a warrior prepared to enter the field of battle (cf. Exodus 15:3; Deuteronomy 1:30; Isaiah 42:13). His armor is spiritual; suited to the nature of the conflict.

### ***Isaiah 60:1-22***

- Made glorious through the light of God's presence (60:1-3).
  - The light and glory will come when the Word becomes flesh, bringing life and light and revealing the Father in all the brightness of His majesty (John 1:4, 9, 14, 18).
  - The brightness of this light in a world of moral and spiritual darkness will attract the heathen. Drawn by this illuminating and guiding light, they will come to learn of God's ways and to walk in them (2:2-3; cf. 40:5).
- Made glorious through the return of her children (60:4-9).
  - When people come from the world unto God's spiritual Zion, they bring and dedicate to Him all that they have.
  - Drawn to Zion because she has been glorified and beautified by God's presence, light and name, multitudes of foreigners from throughout the world come bringing their all; everything they have is dedicated to Him.

- Made glorious through offerings (60:10-14).
  - The blessings of God's spiritual Zion are open to all at all times. Kings are led captive through a spiritual conquest (2 Corinthians 2:14; 10:5).
  - Zion, which for so long has been afflicted and despised, shall now be honored by her oppressors. They shall do homage in honor of her God who has beautified her.
- Made glorious through her eternal excellency (60:15-18).
  - Because the people of Zion had forsaken God, He gave them up to their own ways (cf. 50:1; 54:6).
  - Recognizing Zion for what she is, the sons of former enemies have been attracted to her.
  - There will be no destruction and desolation within the borders of Zion, for destruction and desolation pertain only to those who know not God.
- Made glorious through God's everlasting light (60:19-22).
  - God is the light and glory of the spiritual city. If the sun and moon can contribute nothing to the splendor of this city, the light of human wisdom and philosophy would add only confusion and darkness.
  - The time at which this prophecy will be fulfilled is in the hand of the Lord; He will hasten it in His time (cf. Mark 1:14-15; Acts 1:7; Galatians 4:4).

### ***Isaiah 61:1-11***

- The herald of good tidings (61:1-3).
  - Although the word "Servant" does not occur in these verses, one feels constrained by the context and likeness to the four Servant Songs previously considered to identify the speaker as the Lord Jesus.
  - The mourners in Zion have signified their grief for her by sprinkling ashes upon their heads. The Lord will now give them a headpiece of beauty instead. For their mourning, He will also give them the oil of joy.
- The mission and blessing of the redeemed (61:4-9).
  - It is evident that the Lord speaks metaphorically in vs. 5, for there is no record that after the return from Babylon foreigners fed the flocks, plowed the fields and dressed the vineyards of the Jews.
  - The seed of the godly, the righteous, will be recognized among the nations because they are different.
- Zion's burst of praise (61:10-11).
  - God has clothed her with garments of salvation and thrown over her robe of righteousness; the filthy garments of the past have been cast off.

- In spite of all the opposition of the heathen, God will anoint the Servant with His Spirit, redeem and glorify Zion, establish an everlasting covenant and make His people known among the nations.

### ***Isaiah 62:1-12***

- The new name and glory of Zion (62:1-5).
  - Righteousness and salvation, the work of God upon Zion, will be seen as a steadily beaming light from a lamp (or torch) that will not go out.
  - The emphasis in vss. 4-5 is the joyous intimate relationship between the sons of Zion, who are God's people, and the land, which is His holy mountain.
- God's protection and provision for Zion (62:6-9).
  - The watchmen will not be silent before the Lord until He establishes His word concerning Jerusalem, making her a praise in the earth.
  - God swears that no more will He give to Zion's enemies the grain and wine for which they had labored, which is to be her sustenance. Zion's food will be spiritual (John 6:27).
- Salvation of the daughter of Zion (62:10-12).
  - In this section, it seems that God is enjoining Zion to prepare for the nations to come in. They are to clear the way into Zion.
  - The prophet is looking to that time when the glory of Zion will be complete through the Savior; then God's reward to the people will be a dwelling place in His presence, the wages for their patient waiting and labor (cf. 40:10).

### ***Isaiah 63:1-19***

- God's vengeance on His enemies (63:1-6).
  - In a vision the prophet sees a strong and mighty warrior coming from Bozrah, a chief city and probably sometime capital of Edom.
  - As one treads grapes in the wine vat, so has He trodden His enemies in the winepress of His wrath, staining His raiment with their blood.
  - God looked closely and intently, expecting and desiring that among all the peoples surely there would be an individual or a nation on His side; but there was neither, just as He has found no counsellor in Zion (41:28; 59:16).
- God's enduring love for His people (63:7-9).
  - The Lord's mercies sum up His sympathy for His people, His deep love for them.
  - God has a right to expect faithfulness for He has chosen them as His people. Moreover, He was their Savior and would always be there to help when called upon. But He was disappointed in them.

- The people's response (63:10-14).
  - Instead of being what He wished to be toward them, God became their enemy, finally abandoning or giving them up as He did before the Flood.
  - By His great strength and mighty power God led His people through all their trials, making His name more glorious.
- An impassioned prayer for mercy and help (63:15-19).
  - The ground of Israel's appeal for help is that God is their Father, the one who brought the nation into existence (cf. Deuteronomy 32:6).
  - If the people hearken to God, it will be well; but if they do not, they will become completely hardened. The plea is for God to return for the sake of Israel, whom He has chosen to be His servants.

### ***Isaiah 64:1-12***

- Prayer for God's presence and action (64:1-7).
  - The prophet continues to speak for the nation; it is their prayer that God rend or tear the heavens behind which He has hidden Himself from them.
  - Even the believers in Israel, with whom the prophet stands, have become affected by the national sins.
  - Either the nation has lost faith in God's willingness to answer prayer, or, in their uncleanness, they consider themselves unfit to approach Him.
- A renewed cry for mercy (64:8-12).
  - God seeks to make the best but may have to settle for something inferior. The people have not yielded themselves; therefore, God must make of them a vessel of dishonor.
  - The prayer closes with two questions to God. Though the questions are not answered explicitly, a negative answer seems to be implied.

### ***Isaiah 65:1-25***

- A just recompense (65:1-7).
  - God's reply is that He is rejecting them and that He will be found of a people who have not sought Him.
  - God has appealed to His people continually; He will not give them up until He is forced to by their stubbornness.
  - Individuals practicing the abomination of necromancy consider themselves holier than the true worshippers of God.
- The salvation of a remnant and the destruction of the faithless (65:8-12).
  - Both Israel and Judah went into captivity, both ceased to exist as political kingdoms and from both God will redeem His remnant.

- The new redeemed state and homeland of spiritual Israel will be characterized by abundance, security and blessings.
- Blessings and judgments (65:13-16).
  - God addresses those who will escape the sword of slaughter but whose lot, being apart from Him, will nonetheless be a hard one.
  - One's name stands for all that he is -- his being, character and personal traits. All that fleshly, rebellious Israel is and has been will be left for a curse.
  - In the New Testament the name "Christian" summarizes all that is new about God's new people.
- The new heavens and the new earth (65:17-25).
  - The coming of the Messiah will introduce a new spiritual and moral order or arrangement. Isaiah's new heavens and new earth are the new arrangement to which Paul refers (Ephesians 1:10).
  - As God has shared the affliction of His people, so He now shares their joy. With former troubles forgotten and with joy and rejoicing in the new creation, weeping and crying are past.

### ***Isaiah 66:1-24***

- God's greatness and the abomination of idolatry (66:1-6).
  - From the beginning of his prophetic work Isaiah has spoken of the coming collapse and fall of the nation because of the moral corruption within.
  - What the people are doing is displeasing to God, for any worship offered in the wrong spirit or unauthorized by God, both then and now, is unacceptable to Him.
- Blessings in the new Zion (66:7-14).
  - The "man child" seems to be none other than the long-expected Servant, the Messiah born of the spiritual Zion, who will "suddenly come into his temple" (Malachi 3:1).
  - The Servant to come will comfort all that mourn for and in Zion (61:2-3); at His coming, mourning will cease (60:20).
- Indignation against the idolaters (66:15-17).
  - In vs. 15 we have a vivid and dramatic picture of God's judgment against the rebellious idolaters in contrast to His blessings upon Zion.
  - The judgment extends beyond the Jews to include all who are in rebellion against Him. The prophet is looking toward the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (Matthew 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24).
  - Instead of going to the sanctuary of God to worship Him in truth, the people are going into gardens of their own creation to worship idols (cf. 65:3-5).

- God's glory proclaimed to the world and the response (66:18-24).
  - With the "middle wall of partition" broken down (Ephesians 2:14), Gentiles from among all the nations will be brought with the redeemed Jews as brethren, as one new man, unto God.
  - There will always be a seed, a faithful remnant who serve God (cf. Psalm 22:30-31). Confusing old national Israel with the new Israel is a chief error among religious teachers today.
  - "All flesh," that is, all those of the new spiritual order, will come before God to worship. That all mankind will come before Him not in physical Jerusalem, but in the new spiritual city, is apparent from the impossibility of the former.