

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #84

Isaiah 56:1-12

We are living in wicked times. Our news is filled with murders, rapes, muggings, kidnappings, and hijackings. We are living in a world of moral and spiritual suicide. Our politicians do not promote a relationship with Jesus Christ and a love for the Word of God and the sad tragedy is neither do most churches. Most churches don't even care if the Scriptures are carefully taught or if people actually reverence God. Our world is a mess. Israel is a mess and what we need is for Jesus Christ to come back here and take charge. What Isaiah says here is that one day He will. One day Jesus Christ will come back and He will take charge.

In **Isaiah 56** we get a glimpse as to what a blessed life and blessed person will be like when Jesus Christ does reign, and we also get a glimpse of what religious leaders will be like before Jesus Christ reigns. The salvation and righteousness of **verse 1** is the salvation and righteousness that Jesus Christ will bring to this world when He returns. What we see is this:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST RETURNS TO REIGN, THOSE WHO HAVE PURPOSED TO GOVERN THEIR LIVES IN RIGHTEOUS WAYS WILL BE BLESSED AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT WILL BE CURSED.

The word "blessed" (**verse 2**) (asher) means to be in a prosperous and fortunate and happy state because God is going to bless you (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 88). So this text describes the kind of person who will be truly happy and fortunate when Jesus Christ returns.

In this chapter we see the kind of person who will love it and be blessed by God when Jesus Christ returns, and we also see the kind of person who will regret it when Jesus Christ returns. This text breaks down nicely into two main descriptions:

DESCRIPTION #1 – The description of those who will be blessed when Christ returns.
56:1-8

John Calvin said this is what God demands from us if we want His blessings. There are six stated actions that one will be involved in that will bring the blessings of God when Christ returns:

Blessed Action #1 - The blessed man is one who will preserve justice. **56:1a**

As the coming of Christ nears, God takes special note of those who preserve justice. In fact, the verb "preserve" in Hebrew is an imperative, so this is a command. The actual word "preserve" (shamar) is one that means to carefully watch and guard something with the idea of keeping, preserving and protecting it (*Ibid.*, p. 837). Now what God is specifically interested in people protecting is "justice." This word is a forensic judgment word. It means to make judgments and rulings in a way that governs right (*Ibid.*, p. 844). This specifically has to do with our relationship with others. We have the responsibility to do what is just in regard to other people.

Now the primary emphasis would be on those who are in a position to make judgments. During the Tribulation, just before Christ returns, finding someone truly interested in preserving justice will be rare. Most will side with the Antichrist who is a satanic deceiver and liar. But it will be critical for one who expects to enter the Kingdom to maintain right judgments.

From a Grace Age perspective, the believer who will be blessed at the Rapture will have been one who made proper judgments and decisions pertaining to his own life as it relates to the lives of others. Blessed people will make sure they deal right with other people.

Blessed Action #2 - The blessed man is one who will do righteousness. **56:1b**

The word “righteousness” shows up twice in **verse 1**. This particular Hebrew word has to do with practicing a righteousness and a piety that lines up with Scripture in one’s personal life (*Ibid.*, p. 703). One who anticipates the return of Jesus Christ and purposes to live a righteous, just, virtuous, and pious life in view of this return will be a blessed person when Christ does return.

Blessed Action #3 - The blessed man is one who does not profane the Sabbath. **56:2a**

Three times in this chapter the Sabbath day is mentioned (**56:2, 4, 6**). **The Sabbath day was a sign between God and Israel (Exodus 31:12-17)**. It was never a sign between God and Gentiles. The thing that characterized the Sabbath in the O.T. is that it was a day of complete rest from any physical activity, especially an agricultural or business pursuit (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 35:3; Leviticus 25:4; Numbers 15:32-36; Nehemiah 10:31).

According to Paul, the New Testament believer is complete in Jesus Christ and the law was nailed to the cross and the Sabbath is no more (Colossians 2:10-16). In fact, Paul warned believers not to ever be enslaved to the law day observances (Galatians 4:9-10). In this Church Age, we worship God on Sunday, the first day of the week. We are not obligated in any way to keep the Sabbath because Christ nailed it to the cross.

However, after this Church Age is over, God’s program will once again swing back to Israel; and in the Tribulation and also in the Millennium, there will be a reinstatement of the Sabbath Day worship (Matthew 24:20; Isaiah 66:22-23).

So the one who will be blessed when Jesus Christ returns, is the one who actually was involved in not profaning the Sabbath Day. The word “profane” is one that means to profane it in the idea of treating it in a loose way. In fact, I understand this Hebrew word to mean to treat something so loosely that you actually destroy the whole sense of it (*Ibid.*, p. 281). One who will be blessed will be one who views the Sabbath Day as sacred because he realizes God’s program with Israel is back under way.

I would like to make a Church Age application to this. I believe many churches will be totally ashamed when Jesus Christ raptures the Church because they profaned worship. Churches are allowing things that are destroying the whole concept of reverent worship.

They are weakening the pulpit ministry allowing plays and bands and programs to replace reverent worship, and when Jesus Christ returns they will not be honored.

Blessed Action #4 - The blessed man is one who does not do any evil. **56:2b**

The one who will be blessed when Christ returns, will not be one given to doing evil. That word evil means that he will keep his hand from doing evil, bad, wicked, malicious things (*Ibid.*, p. 772).

During the Tribulation, evil will reign. People will be given to demon worship, idolatry, murder, immorality, and stealing (Revelation 9:20-21). The man who keeps himself from doing these things will be a blessed man when Christ returns.

There is no doubt that as we near the Rapture, this world will become more and more evil. Blessed is the man or woman or boy or girl who purposes to pursue righteousness and not do evil.

Blessed Action #5 - The blessed man is one of any ethnic background. **56:3-5**

Foreigners and eunuchs were generally despised by Israel. In Nehemiah's day, Israel would not even let any foreigner hear the Word of God (Neh. 13:1, 3). According to the law, a eunuch was one who was cut off from any relationship with God (Deut. 23:1). Now one could be classified as a eunuch physically by a couple of ways. One way would be a literal castration and another way would be a renouncing of marriage. During the Tribulation immorality will dominate, and for one to keep himself pure will take a real commitment to Jesus Christ.

What God states here is that even when His program is aimed at Israel, it makes provisions for anyone of any ethnic background to also receive His blessings. Keep in mind that after the Church Age is over, the program of God will swing back to Israel and God wants people from all nationalities to realize "you also can have a relationship with Me."

God says in **verse 3**, all foreigners and eunuchs will be part of the plan of God. God says in **verses 4-5** that those who purpose to guard worship, please God, and hold fast to His covenant, they too will be able to share in the blessings of God.

Look at the blessings God promises to one who chooses to please God. These blessings will be lived out in the Millennium.

Blessing #1 - God will give them His house. **56:5a** - They will have access to God's house.

Blessing #2 - God will make them a memorial. **56:5b** - They will be memorialized forever.

Blessing #3 - God will give them an eternal name. **56:5c** - A name better than Israeli sons and daughters.

Think of this - a eunuch who has no way to pass on his name ends up with an eternal name far above and beyond any son or daughter.

Blessed Action #6 - The blessed man will have access to acceptable worship. **56:6-8**

Gentiles who show their devotion to God by their service, worship, and obedience will have great access and privileges when Jesus Christ reigns on this earth.

When Jesus Christ establishes His reign in Jerusalem, worship that is acceptable to Him will dominate Kingdom life. This worship will have five features to it:

Feature #1 - It will be worship that features people who love God. **56:6**

Notice the language of **verse 6** - these worshippers have joined themselves to the Lord; they minister for the Lord, they love the name of the Lord, and they are the servants of the Lord, and they loved reverent worship.

Feature #2 - It will be worship at a specific place. **56:7a**

Feature #3 - It will be worship that is joyful. **56:7b**

Feature #4 - It will be worship that is prayerful. **56:7c**

Jesus predicted that one day the Temple in Jerusalem would be called a house of prayer by all nations (Mark 11:17). God's place of worship is to be a place of prayer. That point is mentioned twice in this context. When Isaiah said this, the Temple was standing but nations did not recognize it as a sacred place of prayer; it was a place to loot.

Feature #5 - It will be worship that features burnt offering sacrifices. **56:7b**

Some have questioned why would there be need of this offering if Jesus Christ is reigning and His blood sacrifice was totally sufficient. The answer to this question is that Jesus Christ is going to remind Israel of the sufficiency of His sacrifice all through the Millennium. People will worship Him and they will recognize visibly and physically who He is and what He did.

They will bring these offerings in full recognition of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. More than likely, if these are animal sacrifices, Jesus Christ will specifically permit the animal to be offered and then raise it back up again illustrating what he did. But regardless, sacrificial offerings will be brought to the Lord during the Millennium.

God concludes this in **verse 8** by saying, I will gather people from all over the world, not just Israel to come and worship Me.

No matter who you are, no matter what you have done, you can be a blessed person when Christ returns if you accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on your behalf and then purpose to live your life for Him.

DESCRIPTION #2 – The description of those who will be cursed when Christ returns.
56:9-11

What most don't realize is that the present state of Israel proves that if you don't have Biblical leaders who know God's Word, you can end in disaster. Israel has been a disaster for 2700 years ever since the days of Isaiah. The reason why Israel is in this condition is because their leaders do not know God and do not know the Word of God.

When Isaiah wrote these prophecies, Israel had already collapsed and Judah was on the verge of collapse, and a big reason why was its leadership.

Now you may notice from **verse 9** that God calls the beasts to come to devour these leaders. This is a specific eschatological prediction of a time when God calls the beasts of the field and forest to come and eat. If we compare this with Revelation 19:17-18, we know that this occurs at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So what God is doing here is giving us a picture of the kind of person who will be cursed and devoured when Christ returns. There are ten pictures of the way these cursed people will have lived:

(Cursed Picture #1) - The religious leaders were blind. **56:10a**

These people were blind to their own condition and blind to the truth of God. They cannot see truth.

(Cursed Picture #2) - All of the leaders knew nothing. **56:10b**

They know nothing about God or His Word. What is so interesting is that God says “all” of them know nothing.

(Cursed Picture #3) - All of the religious leaders were like mute dogs. **56:10c**

Now dogs typically bark when they sense danger, but a mute dog cannot bark. These leaders are worse than mute dogs. God’s judgment is coming and they did not herald any warning at all. These prophets and priests should have been communicating the warnings to the people. But they were like mute dogs who could not communicate anything.

J. Vernon McGee said he used to get many letters from pulpit committees asking him for a recommendation for a pastor. He said most of them listed qualifications of what they wanted and the top priority was a good personality. Dr. McGee said they never asked will this man accurately and boldly communicate God’s Word (*Isaiah*, p. 323). As long as the guy is friendly, they could care less if they have a mute dog in the pulpit.

(Cursed Picture #4) - All of the religious leaders were lazy dreamers. **56:10d**

These leaders did not work hard to study and rightly divide the Word of God for the people. They were lazy dreamers. They were delusional. They thought everything was good and okay but they were not right with God; and when Jesus Christ returns, they will pay a severe price.

(Cursed Picture #5) - All of the religious leaders were greedy. **56:11a**

There are many religious leaders who are greedy and in it for the money. They are never happy and they never have enough. So they beg and beg for more and more. I just saw one of these frauds ask people to send him \$1000 dollars even if they had to go in debt on a charge card to do it. He said that he would release God’s blessing on them if they would send him the money. I cannot wait until Jesus Christ returns and devours these false teachers and preachers who are greedy liars.

(Cursed Picture #6) - They were religious leaders with no knowledge. **56:11b**

Look at what God says - these are shepherds who have no understanding.

(Cursed Picture #7) - They were religious shepherds who have all turned to their own way.
56:11c

These shepherds have no understanding of the best grazing grounds for their flocks. They have no idea where to lead them. They are not interested in moving things God's way but their own way.

(Cursed Picture #8) - They were religious leaders who are all after unjust gain. **56:11d**

These leaders were not interested in the welfare of their people but in their own self gain.

(Cursed Picture #9) - They were religious leaders who love to get drunk . **56:12a**

These were religious leaders who promoted getting drunk. I do not think it is a coincidence that we are seeing a rise in alcoholism like we have never seen before. Older people, younger people, and even children are drinking more and more. The morality of our country is gone and religious leaders are the cause.

(Cursed Picture #10) -They were religious leaders who live like there is no tomorrow .
56:12b

These were pleasure lovers who loved pleasure more than God. Their philosophy was to live for today.

Now what chance did any have for experiencing the blessings of God when you have a bunch of Biblically illiterate deadbeats heading up your worship? God says in this text, you can still have the blessings of God. We do not have to let rotten Biblically stupid leadership rob us of our relationship with God.

We do not have to let corrupt leaders rob us of the blessings of God. That is what Isaiah teaches in **Isaiah 56**.

During the Tribulation, just before Second Coming of Jesus Christ, things in the religious world will be very dark. Things will be especially dark for Israel for it will be "the time of Jacob's trouble." Religion will be satanic and demonic and will not be true to the Word of God.

But we also know that as the Church Age winds down, Paul predicted that this very same kind of thing would happen (II Timothy 3:1-7). Paul predicted that most religious people would love pleasure more than God and would live reckless lives. To actually find a person committed to understanding and applying the Word of God will be very rare.

However, in spite of the fact that most of the religious world will go insane, it is still possible for believers to experience the blessings of God. This is precisely what Isaiah says in this chapter.

In this chapter, God promises some amazing blessings to any one who purposes to be right with Him. It does not matter whether one is a Jew or a Gentile. It does not matter how troubling the situation may be - God will bless those who purpose to be right with Him.