

God's Promises to the Eunuch and The Foreigner

Isaiah 56:1-8

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

A. Historical Background

In Isaiah 53, we read about the prophecy of the coming Servant, the Christ, who will come and be an offering for the sins of the people. The effect of His coming will be to make His children numerous through the covenant of peace that He will establish (Is.54). Thus, God offers a glorious invitation to come to the waters and receive life and satisfaction from the All-Knowing God (Is.55). In this chapter, the message is one that speaks of inclusivity and justice of God's kingdom and calling for righteousness and promising acceptance to all who follow God's ways.

Isaiah 55 is set in the 6th century B.C.E, specifically toward the end of the Babylonian exile. This period marks the decline of the Neo-Babylonia empire and the rise of Cyrus the Great of Persia, who allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland. Isaiah 55-66 is addressing the community that have already returned to Judah to rebuild the Temple and were facing post-exilic challenges. Chapter 55 serves as a bridge, looking toward the end of captivity, while chapter 56 addresses the challenges of rebuilding under Persia rule. These chapters reflect a period of restoration, addressing both the joy of returning and the struggle to remain faithful to God amidst social and religious challenges.

B. Biblical Context

God's purpose for humanity from a biblical perspective, is to glorify Him; is to glorify Him; enjoy Him forever; and live in relationship with Him. Man is to reflect His image, caring for His creation and participating in His work on earth. According to Lev.19:33-34, the Law which God had given, the Nation were to protect and welcome the foreigner. They are close to the heart of God: Lev.19:9-10; Deut.10:18-19; Ps.146:9. Early in Jesus' life, his

family was marked by displacement, during the time His family was forced to flee to Egypt from their homeland to escape Herod, so He and His family were foreigners.

God gave Israel laws on inclusion and exclusion of many things. These Laws was to ensure the integrity of the nation. Two such laws were on dealing with those men who were castrated or perhaps born without organs to procreate (eunuch) (Deut.23:1) and foreigners who lived among them (Deut.23:3). These people were considered outsiders or the outcasts among a nation who pride themselves on being God chosen people who the coming Messiah would come through.

II. Lesson: God's Promise to the Eunuch and the Foreigners

1. vv.1-2. Keep Your Hands from Doing Evil

Notice that the call is for the people to keep the covenant God made with them and keep justice and do righteousness, is coming from God. V.2 says "who keep his hands from doing evil. This message was how the prophecy of Isaiah opened Is.1:16-17. Isaiah offers the reasons why the people are to make changes to their lives. The reason was because salvation was coming. Therefore, change the way you are living and keep the covenant which God has made with you because His righteousness is at hand (Matt.3:2; Matt.4:17 & Mk.1:15). This salvation was to be life changing because His salvation would come through His Son, Jesus. Salvation has come and it should be our desire to live differently and be drawn nearer to our Lord and savior. To say it another way, obedience is to be lived out in response to this salvation that has been revealed. In verse 2 it says, "those who are careful to do this are blessed or will be blessed. Also, those who honor the Sabbath, keep themselves from doing evil. Keeping the Sabbath revealed clear commitment to the Lord and was closely associated with righteousness and justice.

2. vv.3-6. God Never Excluded the Foreigner and the Eunuch.

The Prophet's word from the Lord, addressed a special word to both the foreigners and the eunuch who have come into covenant with the Lord. The concern for the foreigner was because of his race (non-Jew) and the eunuch

because of his physical condition. God wants to make it clear that this invitation and glorious offer is not extended to Israel only, but to all people. The foreigners are not to think that they will not be admitted into His family. No one will be distinguished or separated from Gods' people. According to Rom.10:12 and Gal.3:28: "There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, which argue for equal spiritual standing before God through faith. It emphasizes that both groups are equal in need of salvation and has access to God's grace. The same Lord is Lord overall. Notice also that the eunuch was not forgotten, by God. They were not to think of themselves as a dry tree. Meaning they had no use as a man to procreate, to have ancestors to carry their name in the future. According to Deut.23:1-6, these people were not allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord. But this would be completely changed with the coming of the Servant, Jesus. Full admission would be granted to all people. These outsiders, who held to the covenant, are going to be offered a rich blessing. Notice that verse 4 emphasized the keeping of the Sabbath once more. Why? We must understand the purpose of the Sabbath was for commemorating. Deut.5:12-15 gives us clarity on the purpose of the Sabbath rest and memorial. It was to remind the Israelites that they were once were slaves in Egypt and God had brought them out with His mighty hand. It was a time to rest in the provision of God's care and worship Him in spirit and truth. Observing the Sabbath demonstrated their commitment to following the ways of God. The command for the outsiders to keep the Sabbath makes the point to show that these people would be adopted by God into the family because of their faithfulness to following His ways. God tells them that He will give them something far better than a physical family. He will give all the faithful a monument and name that will be everlasting. We are each other brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers and children in the Lord (Matt.12:49-50). We are given an eternal family and lineage that will never be cut off. The Book of Revelations speaks of the Christians who will be persevere through persecution and remaining faithful to the Lord (Rev.3:5; 3:12).

3. vv. 7-8. My House shall be Called the House of Prayer

By choosing the things that pleases God and seeking a relationship with Him, we, like the eunuch and foreigner will be blessed in the Lord. His

house will be called a house of Prayer. Their sacrifices are accepted because they enjoyed serving the Lord and his people. “For my house shall be a House of Prayer for all people. God’s house was to be the place where all people wanted to come to fellowship and enjoy the Father. Every person can come because they have been reconciled by the Blood of Jesus. Think about Jesus, who quoted this verse when He was turning over the tables in the Temple courts (Matt.21:13; Mk.14:17; Lk.19:46). The leaders had turned the place of worship into a place for selling and money changing, for greed and a burden for the people, they were hindering the people from coming to the Lord for money and selling animals. The Temple was structured to limit access to entry to sacred areas based on status. The tearing of the temple curtain, that occurred the moment of Jesus’ death, symbolized the immediate removal of the barrier between God and humanity (matt.27:50-51). God has opened the door for everyone to come to Him, and we are not to put up barriers to hinder them from coming.

III. Conclusion.

We are not to do anything to hinder those who desire to come to Jesus, simply because they look different, smell different, vote different, are from different cultures or anything else. We were all outcast or undesirable at one time before we accepted Christ.

Rom.5:6-8, tells us Christ died for the ungodly. 2Peter 3:4 say, “its God desire that all be saved and come into the knowledge of Him. The sacrifice was for everyone, and grace is extended to all who call on the name of Jesus. God is calling more to come, so let us be the family that is reflecting the character of Him who laid down his life for the outcast or the foreigner. Let us be the family of God that represents the House of Prayer that is joyfully communing with God, not the house of pain that is desiring anything and everything else but the True and Living God. We see that God Himself has inspired the diversity of the earth, and that one day we worship Him alongside people of every tribe and tongue. (Rev.7:9-10). In these challenging times hold on to the hope and promise that those who follow God’s way have been accepted by Him in the Family.