

A STUDY OF ISAIAH 55

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February 8, 2009

Isaiah 55 is in the general context of Isaiah's inspired teaching concerning the promised Messiah and the gospel system that He would begin by His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

Chapter 52:13 through chapter 53 speaks of the suffering Servant, which refers to the promised Messiah. It describes His death on the cross; what He faced to provide salvation for you and me; and how **"He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors"** (v. 12).

Chapter 54 speaks of the "covenant of peace" which refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ which would be for all peoples and for all time.

Then, in chapter 55 Jeremiah is inspired to write about the great invitation given to all people to come to the Messiah.

So, we want to go verse by verse in our study of this great chapter and see what this invitation to an abundant life is all about.

I. Verse 1: **"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."**

Jeremiah begins with the word "Ho!" This word calls attention to the subject. This is a subject of utmost importance and demands our attention.

Then the great invitation is given: **"Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters."** It reminds us of the great invitation of Revelation 22:17, **"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."**

The word 'thirst' often indicates intense desire, and so is applied in the sense of the great need that sinners have for salvation. We know that very few physical needs are as great as our need for water. We get thirsty every day, and we have a need to satisfy that thirst. In fact, we can't continue to live unless we satisfy that thirst - it is vital to our existence. So these words denote the intense need that sinners have for salvation. The Psalmist used similar language in his writings.

Notice Psalm 42:2, **"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."** Psalm 63:1 says, **"O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water."** The Psalmist was not talking about literal thirst. He was talking about spiritual thirst. This great spiritual thirst for deliverance that only God can quench.

Notice also that the invitation is given to **"everyone."** Under the gospel of Jesus Christ it doesn't make any difference who you are, where you're from, what color your skin is, what your station in life is, how good or evil you have been in the past, etc... this invitation is for you. Jesus said in John 7:37, **"...If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."** Notice Jesus used the word "anyone." Not just Jews - not just Gentiles - but anyone who has this spiritual thirst for salvation must come to God through Jesus Christ.

And if this invitation is answered, where does it lead? Isaiah says, **"come to the waters."** Isaiah often used the word "waters" to indicate the abundant blessings that God gives to mankind. Isaiah 35:6 says, **"Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert."** Isaiah 43:20 says, **"The beast of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen."** The waters indicates the great spiritual blessings that would be realized under the Messiah.

Then Isaiah says, **"and you who have no money, come, but and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."** Here is emphasized the absolute freeness of salvation promised through Jesus Christ. No one can excuse himself for not being a Christian because he is poor. The rich can't boast that they have bought salvation. This verse is simply saying that the blessings involved in salvation, the joy, the spiritual nourishment can be enjoyed freely by all.

II. V. 2: **"Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance."**

This question is a good question for all of us, isn't it? Bread is what gives us nourishment - it is what supports our life. It is what we need to live - to exist. Yet, people spend their money - spend their lives pursuing things that do not satisfy - things that do not provide life. Isn't this a striking description of many in our world today? People who are

looking for happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction everywhere but where they can find true satisfaction?

We need to listen to God. We need to **"eat what is good."** We need to spend our lives pursuing those spiritual things that provides our souls delight in abundance.

III. V. 3: **"Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you - the sure mercies of David."**

To incline the ear is to listen to what is said. In other words, answer the invitation. And if you do that, your soul shall live. And, of course, the opposite of that is true. Anyone who rejects this great invitation from the Savior, will die - spiritually - by being separated from God.

In this passage Jeremiah speaks of an everlasting covenant. It's talking about the New Covenant of Christ. When he speaks of the sure mercies of David, he is speaking of the "Son of David", the "Son of Man," Jesus Christ.

How do we know that? When the apostle Paul was in Antioch of Pisidia, he went into the Synagogue and was invited to speak. He begin giving a short history of the Jews and how God had led the people of Israel through the wilderness, and then talked about the period of the judges, and then finally the fact that the people asked for a king and God gave them Saul. He then spoke of David being appointed to the throne and then spoke of Jesus being raised up as Savior. He spoke of John the Immerser preparing the way for Jesus. Then, in verse 26 he speaks of the "word of this salvation" being sent to them, referring to the gospel of Christ. He then speaks of Jesus' death, burial and God raising Jesus from the dead. Then, in verse 34 he says, **"And the He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: I will give you the sure mercies of David."** Then he shows how this phrase is not speaking of King David, but of Jesus Christ. Those sure mercies that results in salvation come through Jesus Christ. This everlasting covenant is for everyone everywhere.

IV V. 6 **"Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and a commander for the people."**

This is describing the Messiah - the Christ - Jesus. He is a "witness" to the people. The Hebrew word means one who is a witness, one who bears witness; a prince; a ruler; a lawgiver." And that is what the Christ is - He is a lawgiver... Giving the New Covenant to all of mankind.

He is the leader - He is the commander for the people and since He is our Leader and Commander we must be loyal to Him.

V. V. 5: **"Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you."**

Jeremiah addresses the Messiah. The Messiah would call a nation that He did not know. This is talking about His calling the Gentiles through the gospel. As a Jew (in the national sense) He did not know the Gentiles - He did not recognize them, and the same is true of the Gentiles in reference to Him.

The Father, Who is referred to here as the LORD your God and the Holy One of Israel, had glorified the Christ and in turn Christ had glorified the Father. When the Son was glorified, the Father was glorified. This was done through the teaching that Jesus did: Luke 4:15 says, **"And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.** He was glorified through His miracles: At the death of Lazarus Jesus said, John 11:4 **"...This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."** He was glorified by His death, burial and resurrection: John 12:23 **"But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."** Jesus was speaking of His death here. He was glorified through the great sacrifice He made for mankind.

VI V. 6-7: **"Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."**

Now Jeremiah returns to the great invitation, and shows the urgency of answering the invitation. Those who say there is nothing for a person to do to receive salvation misunderstand what the Bible teaches about salvation. There is something the sinner must do. He must **"Seek the LORD."** This includes all that is involved in obedience to the gospel of Christ: Hearing the gospel; Repenting of ones sins; Confessing faith in Christ; Being baptized into Christ; and living a faithful Christian life.

Why the urgency in seeking the LORD? Because there will come a time when we will not be able to find Him. There will come a time when He is no longer near. So implied in this statement is the fact that God

may be found, and that there will come a time when we cannot seek His favor.

The teaching is, that through the Messiah the offer of salvation will be made to people fully and freely. But the time will come when it will be withdrawn. This is why Paul was inspired to write in 2 Corinthians 6:2 **"...Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."**

My friends, every time we put off obedience, it makes it that much harder next time to obey. We need to know that God is merciful now. That He is willing to forgive now. But we also need to know that there will come a time (and we don't know when) when Jesus comes back in Judgment. And then it will be too late. We will not be ready for that day if we do not obey today.

But if we are willing to forsake our wicked ways. If we are willing to forsake our unrighteous thoughts and return to the Lord. He will have mercy on us and He will abundantly pardon.

When I think of God's mercy, I think of what Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:4-7. **"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."** God is rich in mercy - He wants to pardon - He will abundantly pardon - He will make us alive with Christ. He will show the exceeding riches of His grace to us in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. How can we not obey a God like that?

VII. V. 8-9: **"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."**

This seems to be a somewhat surprising thing to say at this point. Why would God at this time, in the middle of offering this invitation - in the middle of explaining the great blessings that one can enjoy by answering this invitation - start talking about how His thoughts and ways are higher than man's thoughts and ways?

I believe it is because it is so hard for human beings to understand how a perfect and just God could forgive sinful people. How could God give an invitation like this - an invitation that involves so many great spiritual

blessings - and especially the blessing of forgiveness of all of our sins, to people who are wicked - who are unrighteous?

We human beings normally wouldn't extend that kind of invitation, would we. We harbor malice - we seek revenge - there is reluctance to forgive. But God has no such malice - no such need for revenge - no reluctance to forgive. He doesn't think like we think - His ways are not like our ways.

I know we use the principle in this passage in reference to a lot of other things, but the context is dealing with the great invitation. It is dealing with God's willingness to forgive - His desire for our salvation. If it were up to human beings, probably no one would be saved. But fortunately, we serve a God who is not like us - who is not willing that any should perish and who desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

But we can't come to Him in just any way. We must come to Him in His way. We can't choose the way, because our ways are not His ways. We can come up with our own plan of salvation, but it won't save us, because our ways are not His ways. No, we must do what He says in His word to be saved - we must follow His plan of salvation - we must be members of His church - we must work in His vineyard and serve Him like He directs.

And that which gives us direction is God's all-powerful word. This is what he speaks of in the next two verses.

VIII. V. 10-11: **"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."**

The language that Isaiah uses to describe the good that God's word does is familiar to all of us. The snow and the rain - the moisture accomplishes great things. It's purpose is fulfilled in watering the earth and providing the moisture that plant life needs. It is because the snow and rain fulfill its purpose that we are able to live.

The same is true of God's word. It accomplishes its purpose of calling all people to that which will provide eternal life to each one who believes and obeys it. God's word is powerful and it provides life - and we need to teach it to others so that they too, can enjoy this life.

When we do that, then we can enjoy the great spiritual blessings given in figurative language in verses 12 and 13.

IX. Verses 12-13: **"For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."**

All of this is figurative language indicating the joy of salvation - the joy of answering the great invitation - the joy and peace and security that can be yours today by your answering this great invitation.

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