

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 139

December 5, 2021



The Nativity by Rogier van der Weyden Cir 1445-1489

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

One-Hundred-Thirty-Nine

God Answers Isaiah's Prayer Pt I

December 5, 2021

Daniel E. Woodhead

Isaiah 65:1-7

¹I am inquired of by them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. ²I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; ³a people that provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks; ⁴that sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; ⁵that say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. ⁶Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, yea, I will recompense into their bosom, ⁷your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, that have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills; therefore will I first measure their work into their bosom (ASV, 1901).

GENTILES TO BE ADMITTED TO COVENANT BLESSINGS

Isaiah 65:1

¹I am inquired of by them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name (ASV, 1901).

This chapter constitutes Lord's answer to Isaiah's great prayer of intercession. His mercy is reserved for the believing people of Israel and the Gentiles, who will turn to Him in repentance and faith. When the Lord says that *I am inquired of*. He is essentially saying that "I permitted Myself to be sought," or inquired of by those (the Gentiles) who did not ask for Me. The Hebrew expresses passive actions that the subject allows to Him or have an effect upon Him. The Lord is stating that He graciously made Himself available to non-Israelites. I said, *Behold, me, behold me* (Here am I, here am I), the repetition emphasizing His ready availability to Gentiles, here called a nation that was not called by my name (Isaiah 63:19; Hosea 1:10), that did not call on My name.

This passage refers to the calling in of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the Gospel, (Romans 10:20, 21). And Paul observes that herein *Esaias is very bold*, not only in foretelling a thing so improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses's words would be made good (Deuteronomy 32:21), *I will provoke you to jealousy by those that are no people*. Here it is prophesied that the Gentiles, who had been afar off from the Covenants given to Israel, should be made nigh to them. The apostle Paul characterizes it this way. *I was found of those that sought me not; I was made manifest to those that asked not for me* (Romans 10:20). It is a blessed change

for the Gentiles and they were surprised. Those who had long been without God in the world shall now be seeking Him. The Gentiles are here characterized as those who had not said, *Where is God my maker?* shall now begin to enquire after Him. God is saying here that He will enable the Gentile nations at some point to begin to seek Him. Not the pagan deities that are no gods. But the genuine God of the nation Israel.

ISRAEL TURNED AWAY FROM THE LORD

Isaiah 65:2–7

²I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; ³a people that provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks; ⁴that sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; ⁵that say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. ⁶Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, yea, I will recompense into their bosom, ⁷your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, that have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills; therefore will I first measure their work into their bosom (ASV, 1901).

Israel, as the apostle Paul explains it, in Romans 10:21 whom he calls a disobedient and gainsaying people; who believed not in Christ, obeyed not His Gospel, but contradicted and blasphemed it. They were rebellious against Him, would not have Him to reign over them, nor submit to His ordinances. He lovingly invited them, earnestly pressed and urged them, and that daily and frequently, and used all human methods to gain their attention, and acceptance with them. But it was all to come to an negative end. They would not obey Him.

They committed their sins openly, without any fear of the divine Being, and in defiance of Him, not at all awed by His omniscience and omnipresence. They committed their sins in the open streets, and even in the temple, they sacrificeth in gardens. And when they sacrificed to idols, they made bricks and tiles, which they put incense for the idols upon them. They did this upon the roofs of their houses, which were covered with tiles, (Jeremiah 19:13) when incense should only have been burnt upon the golden altar which was erected exclusively for that purpose.

They practised necromancy, which is to consult the dead, where they imagined demons and departed spirits haunted, and of whom they fancied they might get knowledge of future things. The text says that they were eating swine's flesh in defiance of the Law. Swine were sacrificial animals in Egypt and with the Greeks and Romans. They do not appear to have been employed for this purpose either by the Assyrians or the Babylonians. It was probably in Israel that the Jews had eaten "swine's flesh," at sacrifices to Baal or Astarte (Ashtoreth). In later times to do so was regarded as one of the worst abominations (1 Maccabees 1:41–64; 2 Maccabees 6. and 7). *Broth of abominable things* is referring to either broth made from swine's flesh, or from the flesh of other unclean animals, as the hare and rabbit (Leviticus 11:5, 6), or perhaps simply broth made from the flesh of any animals that had been offered to idols (Acts 15:29).

They said “*Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.*” Initiation into heathen mysteries was thought to confer on the initiated a holiness unattainable otherwise. Thus, the heathenized Jew claimed to be holier than the true servants of Jehovah. The heathenized Jews are fuel for the wrath of God, which kindles a fire wherein they burn continually. The misconduct of His people which lies open “before Him,” so that their sin is ever in His sight (Psalm 56:8; Malachi 3:16; Revelation 20:12). I will not keep silence (Psalm 50:3). “Keeping silence” is a metaphor for complete inaction. But will recompense, or rather, *until I have recompensed, yea, recompensed them into their bosoms* (Luke 6:38).

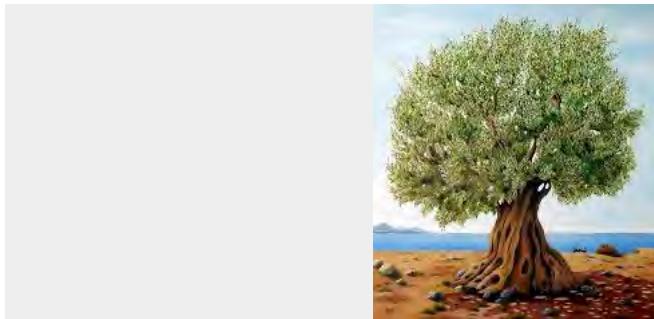
The point of the concluding verse is to show that the dependence on cultic righteousness is not something new. The point is one of continuity, just as Jesus said of the people of his day.

Luke 13:34–35

³⁴O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! ³⁵Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (ASV, 1901)

The *mountains* and *hills* had long been places of idolatrous worship, and especially in preexilic times this worship was intermingled with that of The Lord so that people who thought they were worshiping the Lord were actually bringing disgrace on him. The Lord is charging the Israelites with this same kind of syncretism. The apostle Paul describes the process whereby the Gentiles are brought into His blessings. He refers to it as The Olive Tree.

The Olive Tree of Romans 11 has been an enigma to many Bible interpreters throughout the centuries of the Church Age.



Romans 11:16b–26

^{16b} and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree; ¹⁸glory not over the branches: but if thou gloryest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee. ¹⁹Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. ²⁰Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not highminded, but fear: ²¹for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee.

²²Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. ²³And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? ²⁵For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; ²⁶and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written (ASV, 1901).

THE OLIVE TREE IS THE SPIRITUAL COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

The Olive Tree is like the Abrahamic Covenant which is the blessing God bestows on His people. The Olive Tree is the Spiritual Commonwealth of Israel, and each of those terms has meaning. It can also be said that it is the Spiritual Blessings of God.

PAUL SPEAKS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL, IN THE CONTEXT OF UNSAVED GENTILES.

Ephesians 2:11–13

¹¹Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; ¹²that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ (ASV, 1901).

That is a very stinging rebuke of unsaved Gentiles. The Lord says some pretty harsh things about unsaved Jewish people, but this description of unsaved Gentiles is quite strong. “*alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*”

THE OLIVE TREE IS SPIRITUAL, COMPOSED OF RIGHTEOUS, BORN-AGAIN PEOPLE

In contrast to the nation Israel, composed of believers and unbelievers, the Olive Tree is spiritual, because only righteous, born again, blood bought believers are in the Olive Tree, whether Jews or Gentiles. Nobody else is in it. Unsaved Gentiles are not in the Olive Tree. Unsaved Jews do not remain in the Olive Tree. Only born again believers are in the Olive Tree.

THE OLIVE TREE IS A COMMONWEALTH, WITH ALLEGIANCE TO THE KING OF THE JEWS

The word the Apostle uses for commonwealth is politeiva" (politeias), akin to our politics, peoplehood or nationhood. Through the blood of Israel's Messiah (Christ), the Gentiles who were once aliens, have been made nigh (near) to the Commonwealth of Israel. What Paul is describing as the Commonwealth of Israel is the same as to what he describes in more detail as the Olive Tree.

Furthermore, the Olive Tree is the Commonwealth of Israel, because Gentiles who have been attached (grafted in) to the Olive Tree owe allegiance to Israel's Book (the Bible), Israel's God, and Israel's Messiah. It is similar to the British Commonwealth, in which the people of Canada and Australia are not actually citizens of England, but owe allegiance to the Queen, and have a special relationship with the British people. The Gentiles who have trusted in Jesus the Messiah, have a special relationship with Israel, its people and Land, and have sworn allegiance to the King of the Jews.

GENTILE BELIEVERS MUST RECOGNIZE THEY ARE GRAFTED IN AMONG THE NATURAL BRANCHES

In addition to our special relationship to Israel, the Gentiles who have been grafted in to the Olive Tree by faith in Christ among the natural branches, have a special relationship to the Jewish believers in Christ, who are the natural branches. The tragedy is that the two kinds of branches in the Olive Tree (Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ) have such a hard time worshipping our Lord together.

Gentile believers also have a special relationship with the revived nation of Israel. To some Christians, Israel has no more significance than Uganda or Pakistan. But if we understand our role in the Olive Tree, we see that we are in the Commonwealth of Israel, and everything about Israel is important to us: its history, archaeology, politics, preservation and prophecy. Nothing about the Land of the Bible should be foreign to us, as the time of the return of the Messiah draws ever nearer, when Jerusalem, Israel's capital, will be the capital city of the world during the Lord's Millennial reign on earth.

BOAST NOT AGAINST THE BRANCHES

How ominous and prophetic is the command the Apostle Paul issues to the Roman Christians, when he warns them, "*glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee.*"

Why would Gentile believers boast against the unsaved Jewish branches? Amazingly, they would boast that the Jews were broken off, so that the Gentiles could replace them. This is the origin of Replacement Theology, which blossomed so greatly early in church history, and continues unabated until today. As it is understood today, the largely Gentile Church has replaced the Israel of the Old Testament. Indeed, the Church is the new, improved and enlarged Israel. This has become the predominant theological view in most Christian circles, and is also found in evangelical circles, as well. The Lord, however, condemns this glorying or boasting against the branches as something that is abhorrent to Him.

PROVOKE TO JEALOUSY

One of the responsibilities that Gentiles who believe in Christ have toward the nation Israel is to provoke them to jealousy, as we read in Romans 11. We must admit we have not done a very good job. Some have said, rather than provoking the Jews to jealousy, we have mostly just provoked the Jews. But when a Jewish person sees Gentile believers in Christ, his reaction is supposed to

be, “What is that Gentile, that goy, doing with my God, my Bible and my Messiah? I want them. The Church’s Gentiles have not lived lives in such a way that it would cause many Jewish people to be provoked to jealousy.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE OLIVE TREE IS ESSENTIAL TO BIBLICAL ECCLESIOLOGY & ESCHATOLOGY

The text of the Olive Tree has been an enigma to Bible interpreters for most of the church age, and is often ignored more than explored. The Olive Tree is the Spiritual Commonwealth of Israel. It does not detract from the unique features of the Church or Israel, but it is a special entity created by God. Just as we need to find our proper relationship to the Church and Israel, we also must relate in an obedient manner with reference to the Olive Tree. Anything less would be intentional blindness to the revealed Word of God.

There is also a serious problem about attempting to do prophetic studies with an attitude that ignores the teachings of the Olive Tree and leans toward an anti-Semitic or anti-Israel position. There are wonderful prophecies specifically about the Church in the Scriptures, including the imminent Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Marriage of the Lamb, the reigning with Christ in the Millennium, and the New Jerusalem. However, most of the volume of prophecy in the Bible has to do with the future destiny of Israel, such as preservation in the Diaspora, the Perpetual Remnant, the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, the National Reconciliation with Messiah Jesus, the Restoration of Israel in preparation for and during the Millennium, and the New Jerusalem.

If we do not understand Israel or the Olive Tree, we will be prone to make many errors in interpretation of Bible Prophecy. Sadly, this is what has happened in much of church history, in the development of Replacement Theology, Amillennialism, and, more recently, Progressive Dispensationalism. It is only the Apostolic premillennial, literal interpretation of the Word of God that recognizes the Church, Israel and the Olive Tree, and their rightful position in the plan of God.

Next message: THE PLACE OF REFUGE

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