

## Exalted Ideas (Isaiah 55:8–13)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (3/24/2019)

### Introduction

1. Spurgeon wrote, “The power of thought is one point in which man is created in the image of God.” It is in this ability that intimacy and fellowship with the Lord is possible.
  - a. Thoughts assume intelligence and the ability to receive, understand, and share concepts into theory and practice.
  - b. However, what God is communicating in our passage is a clear rebuke of the sinful degeneration of human thought that will always refuse His pardon.
2. Sin has degraded the ability of humans to think with respect to the highest and most important matters that concern both present and eternal matters.
  - a. The sinful mind is incorrigibly corrupted from its true function and purpose, being continuously occupied by things selfish and immoral.
  - b. Satan’s design for such thoughtless persons is for them to act in frivolous ways, descending even farther to the groveling level of mere animals.
3. Keeping the kingdom objective in mind along with the promise of salvation and restoration of a portion of humanity, the prophet is holding forth both the free call to sinners and the utter inability of the same to respond to that call.
  - a. The absolute confidence that the prophet expresses is in the fulfillment of God’s purpose through His greater thoughts and ways. He will accomplish all His will with certainty: “*For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace*” (v. 12).
  - b. What lies between verse 8 and verse 12 is the revelation of the sure means of a sovereign God overcoming the devastation of sinful thinking and acting, saving sinners and restoring them to truth and light, joy and peace.
  - c. God’s glorious saving work is not about favoring humans who have rebelled against Him. While it is true that He loves us and desires to be gracious, in the final analysis He is set on glorifying His Son with a multitude of redeemed and transformed humans to worship and serve Him forever. To God be all praise and glory!

### I. Divine Transcendence (vv. 8, 9)

1. Verse 8 introduces what theology refers to as *transcendence*, the doctrine that God is infinitely above His created order in every way.
  - a. God is *holy*, meaning that He, being uncreated, is separate from His creation, which is unique to biblical Christianity. Most religions regard their deity in terms of *pantheism* (god is in everything) or *monism* (everything is a part of god).

Neither is there a limit to His existence either as to space or time.
  - b. This doctrine flows from the truth of God’s absolute sovereignty (Daniel 4:34, 35; Isaiah 66:1, 2).
2. The proposition is set forth in the admonition, “*Let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God*” (v. 2). This is followed by five primitive Hebrew particles that are translated “for”: (1) “*For he will abundantly pardon*”, (2) “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,*” (3) “*For as the heavens are higher than earth,*” (4) “*For as the rain and snow come down,*” and (5) “*For you shall go out in joy.*”

- a. Each of these establishes the ground upon which the promise of forgiveness rests.
  - b. Each also supports the argument that God provided whatever He needed to accomplish His purpose to save and recover a people for His name to honor His Son in the kingdom of heaven. If we seek Him, repent of sin, and return to Him, we are assured of full welcome and complete pardon.
3. Mankind's great folly is the deception of equality with God. Every error of doctrine and practice is linked to the assumption that the creature has some measure of equal standing with the Creator. Therefore, the passage also stands as a rebuke to our unbelief. What thoughts do we have that fall under this stern rebuke?
- a. We have high opinions of ourselves and think that God is in heaven to serve us because we are convinced that some goodness resides in us.
  - b. Sinners may fear that God will not be reconciled to them because they did not find in their hearts to be reconciled to someone who had so intentionally and frequently offended them.

## **II. Certain Success (vv. 10, 11)**

- 1. Verse 10 begins with the third primitive particle, describing the mystery of how God waters the earth to assure it will be fruitful.
- 2. This natural occurrence on earth illustrates the effective work of the Word of God (Romans 10:17; Isaiah 40:8).
- 3. The Word of God is the written expression of His thoughts. Here God utters His sovereign decree: The Word of God "*shall accomplish that which I purpose.*" Compare this certainty with the lament of God to those who refused His call (Isaiah 48:18, 19). Unlike the invitation or instruction of God that can be refused, the decrees of God cannot be refused.

## **III. Happy Consequences (vv. 12, 13)**

- 1. "*You will go out in joy.*" This applies to all who are changed by the gospel through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit and describe a second exodus to illustrate a *final* exodus in this gospel age that includes Gentiles.
- 2. Not only will the redeemed go out with rejoicing, but eventually, will the whole of the creation enjoy the benefits of Christ's work for His own (Psalm 96:12, 13; Romans 8:10).
- 3. The end is glorious beyond our imagining: "*It shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*"

## **What Can We Take Away?**

- 1. The big picture includes much more than just getting sinners saved and churching. The saving and restoring work of God is about taking back what was usurped through the sin of Adam. Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the means by which He is overthrowing the darkness. It all centers in the Son, and all glory goes to the Son.
- 2. How effective is the Word of God to you? Has it brought you to salvation and assurance in Jesus? Is it transforming your life from day to day as it does its powerful and life-changing work in you through the Spirit? Are you feeding on its truth and giving it out to those around you? (Psalm 119:89–97).