

The Wonder of It All

Book of Isaiah

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Look with me one more time in your Bibles to Isaiah 66 and unless the Lord stops my mouth in the middle somehow, we are going to finish up in this message our study in the book of Isaiah. I won't even venture to say how many years ago we began but here we are and it has been, for me, a very blessed journey, one of those that I hate to see come to an end. You almost feel like starting over again, such is the way that the Lord has at least blessed this portion, this Gospel, to my own heart by Brother Isaiah. It is such a blessing to read these that the Lord used as instruments to write his word and to know that they are saved on the same basis as any one of us that the Lord has been pleased to save: by grace and through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone and the very same Christ revealed in him as the Christ that is revealed in any that the Lord has redeemed. There is that oneness there.

But here in Isaiah 66, beginning with verse 18, "For I know their works and their thoughts," and this refers back to verse 17, the abomination of the reprobates. I know that's not a popular word but there are those that God has passed by; he has left to themselves. And even as I read in 1 Peter 2, not simply permits to go to hell, but they were there appointed. God is sovereign whether it's to save sinners or whether it's to damn them, it is his to do. So here when it says in verse 17, "shall be consumed together, saith the LORD," with their idolatries, with their false worship, and the Lord says, "For I know their works and their thoughts." That's interesting isn't it? It's not just, because most people we talk to will say, "Well, God's going to weight what we do and hopefully the good will outweigh the bad." Well, even if that were the only standard, you would be condemned. Any works of your own is nothing but filthy rags.

But notice here, "I know their works and their thoughts." You've forgotten what you thought yesterday but unless Christ has paid your sin debt, those thoughts are already waiting you for the day of condemnation. They will never be erased. You look at the thoughts of one of the Lord's and the only thing that's recorded is purity and righteous and just because Christ's righteousness has been imputed to your account if you're the Lord's. But all others, all of this stands against you in the day of judgment.

But now there's a contrast and this is where I want us to see. This book ends in a beautiful crescendo of God's grace and God's mercy in Christ whereby there is a remnant

according to grace and he says, "it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory." And we're going to see that that glory which they shall see is not one of judgment. There is a glory in God's judgment, but there is a glory in his salvation that he would cause nations and tongues to come and to see and that's what's described here. Verse 19, "I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles," among the nations. "And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh," all kinds of flesh, all types of sinners from different types of countries, nations, but also social levels, kings but also paupers, "come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

There is a wonder of the world that has gone undiscovered by the world from the beginning of time and likely it will continue that way until the end of time. When I say wonder of the world, I think about back when I was in school having to learn the seven wonders of the ancient world and now they've got all kinds of wonders of the modern world and wonders of science and I pity kids today in school because they've got to memorize all that stuff too. But the seven wonders of the ancient world, the pyramids of Egypt. That was an easy one to remember. The hanging gardens of Babylon. I remember seeing some statue of Zeus, of Olympia. These are things that the world esteems and considers to be wonders, but the true wonder of the world that goes imperceptible except to those whose eyes the Lord has opened, is what I've just read for you right here. It's the wonder of God's working in grace to call out a people from every tribe, nation and tongue and it is truly the one wonder that is forever. All these other things that men consider to be wonders, the day is coming when they'll all be destroyed. They're the works of men's hands and it's amazing to me that men will attribute wonder to these things that their hands have built but even take a pyramid of Egypt, and I've never, I've lived a good portion of my life in Africa but I've never seen an actual pyramid in Egypt. I've never been to Egypt, but I can imagine that if I was to stand there and look at one of those so-called wonders, and yet compare it to a mountain I did see when I was flying from Kenya down to Madagascar one time way up 33,000 feet and it was the rainy season and there were these huge clouds just covering the earth, and then I looked out the window of the jet and I see a mountain peak poking out from the top of the mountain. I remember taking a picture of it and for a while I had it hanging in my office in Africa, but it was Kilimanjaro, some 19,000 feet. Here I was at 33,000 feet but it was almost as if you could just reach out and touch it and I was awed by that. I thought, "Why would I want to stand

there and look at a pyramid man has made when you consider even in this earth and then go out and look at the stars at night and the universe and our solar system and consider?"

But none of that even compares to what I've just read for you: the glory of God. That's what it says here in verse 18, "it shall come." So this is looking forward, "that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory." There is a specific glory of God that he has declared in Scripture and I will tell you what that glory is. The princes of the world didn't recognize it, else they would not have crucified him, but the glory of God John wrote about, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God full of grace and truth." And it's to that glory that men are blinded. They don't see it. They don't see the work that he came to accomplish in laying down his life but, dear friends, that's what I see in this particular portion. This work that Christ would come and accomplish. When it says there in verse 19, "And I will set a sign among them," that word is actually the word "an ensign; a banner." Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself." When he said "all men," he's talking about men of all sorts, "unto myself." Then it says, "and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations."

So the whole purpose of this is really a condemnation of the nation of Israel, in other words, natural Israel, because here they were, they had the oracles of God and yet they remained in unbelief and God through Isaiah pronounced judgment upon them as a nation. But when it says here in verse 22, "so shall your seed and your name remain," he's saying that even though earthly Israel would be set aside, there would be that true Israel. There would be that Israel whose seed and whose name would remain, but guess what? It wasn't to be made up of just Jew alone, it was to be Jew and Gentile.

It's interesting when you read here in verse 19 all of these different places that are named. Some of them you can find in Greece. Some of them you can find in Asia Minor. Some of them you can find in Europe. And some of them you can find in Africa. When it talks there about Pul and Lud, it's talking about African countries that exist today. And it shows that it's always been God's purpose to save a people from every tribe, nation and tongue. Even though it began with the nation of Israel in seed form, yet it would continue.

And these and that's why verse 23 says, "it shall come to pass." Based upon this glory being revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that "from one new moon to another, from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD." In other words, all kinds of flesh, and certainly we can say that's so. Not only in the world, that's one of the beauties of technology today that we're in connection with the world. I can sit here in my study on a Saturday morning now and on Skype connect with our brethren in Malawi and preach for them without even leaving this city. That was unheard of years ago, but here it is.

But I think there is one of these that is described here as "the seed whose name would remain forever." And these are just the ones we know of. I would be foolish to think that only those that I know about are the Lord's. There are people out there that the Lord has

been pleased to reveal his Son in and who love and worship the Lord Jesus Christ by his blood and righteousness alone that he, by his Spirit through the word, is drawing to themselves that perhaps I've never met and they don't even know me and I may never know them in this lifetime. But that doesn't matter, the Lord knows those that are his. That's what's important.

So I believe that what we have here described in these verses is that glory which is Christ, and we sing, "The bride eyes not her garment but her dear Savior's face." As much as I love to speak to you about the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone which is our salvation, yet in reality, it's not the blood and righteousness, it's whose blood it is; it's whose righteousness it is. And the song throughout eternity is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Let's never get that out of perspective. You can't talk about justification without talking about the Justifier. You cannot talk about redemption apart from talking about the Redeemer. Was the act of the kinsman redeemer important to Ruth? Absolutely, but when it came to being united with him, it was to him that she was united. He being the kinsman redeemer, took her unto himself and I would that all of us consider that.

But what we have described here because it talks about nations coming, it talks about them seeing his glory, you see in verse 19, "that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles," that could be translated also among the nations. But it speaks of worship. How it is that those that are the Lord's draw unto him and worship and you can see in verse 20, "they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD." This is not speaking of a blood offering. There is no human that could be a blood offering unto the Lord, but just like in the Old Testament, you had your meal offerings. It had to be accompanied with a blood sacrifice to be accepted but they were meal offerings.

There were thank offerings, offerings of thanksgiving and that's what's described here in verse 20. Who are those that Christ has redeemed? Well, they're an offering unto the Lord. You remember the writer of the Hebrews quoting our Lord said, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me." To me, that's the greatest wonder of all, that God should love a sinner such as me and that Christ being given these sinners to represent, considers them his inheritance. They are his inheritance and just like you present an offering unto the Lord, we have here a picture in verse 20 of sinners that would be redeemed by the glory of Christ being offered unto the Lord. Now, I would not want to be offered unto the Lord apart from through a representative, through a mediator, through a sacrifice, through one that has already been accepted. I would fear ever standing before a holy God without a blood sacrifice that has been accepted of God the Father as it is in Christ. The world doesn't even tremble, such is their depravity. You hear people talking about dying, "Well, they're in a better place." Or if they were a famous musician, "Well, they're up there entertaining everybody in heaven." That's the view of the world. They have no concept of what it is to stand before a holy God.

But to be one of these and you can see, verse 20, "they shall bring all your brethren." That word right there is not one that if you've got a natural Jew, that he would use of a Gentile.

They're not brethren. There is this division among men over races, but in Christ that division goes away. He's saying, "They shall bring all your brethren." In other words, "When my glory is revealed, when my Son comes into this world and lays down his life and these are redeemed, they will be brought for an offering unto the Lord and they will be your brethren, those that were Jews and that Christ has redeemed, they'll be one body, one temple, one spiritual temple."

Now, the Jews typically, verse 20, did not ride on horses or in chariots. That was something that the world did. They walked but they did ride on mules. That was part of the way they came, or in litters. Litters was actually a coach that servants would carry. That had to do with kings, royalty. When you get done looking at all of this, who are these brethren that would be an offering unto the Lord? They are people from every status of life: rich and poor; bond and free.

The Lord says what? "They shall bring all your brethren. You'll be as one under the Lord. To my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD." He's not talking about bringing them to go back to that old way of worship through the carnal fleshly ordinances that had originally been established. No, he's talking about them being brought to the true Jerusalem which we've already seen represents the church.

"And as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel unto the house of the LORD." That's an interesting word too. You remember when the Lord would have Peter go to Cornelius' house and in that dream vision he lowered a sheet with all kinds of impure foods that Peter had never eaten and he refused to eat it. You say, "What was the point of that dream?" Well, the Lord is preparing him to go into a Gentile's house and he admitted, "I've never done that." He grew up a Jew. Gentiles over here, Jews here. But what did the Lord tell him? "Don't call unclean what I have called clean." And that's the picture we have here in verse 20, just "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD." These shall be our brethren from these various nations and they will be one people and I will be their shepherd.

That's what the Lord said in John 10 when he said, "other sheep I have who are not of this fold. Them also I must bring." There was the Jewish fold, but there was also these others that he would bring. I'm thankful it's that way because as far as I know, I don't have, well maybe way back there, but I don't have an ounce of actual Jewish blood in me. I might. I don't know about it, but the thing is, I'm considered a Gentile but that doesn't matter before the Lord. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. They are made to be one unto the Lord.

And look at verse 21, "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites." Now in Christ, the whole Levitical system has been set aside so you say, "What's this about?" This is talking about us being a royal priesthood unto the Lord, coming through our high priest which is the Lord Jesus Christ. Just like the Levites served Aaron the high priest in the Old Testament, so we serve our high priest who is Christ. But the Lord in Christ has made us so and so we come unto him not with blood sacrifices but with the sacrifices of praise. That's how we come and worship, it's through him.

And this in verse 21, "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites." That's an astonishing thing to a Jew, that God would even consider a Gentile bringing anything unto him and yet through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is what was accomplished.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed," this seed. That seed for which Christ died. Isaiah spoke in Isaiah 53 that he would see his seed and be satisfied. God the Father saw his seed, which is Christ, and his seed in him described here, would remain forever, that name remain.

"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD." That's true now and it shall be true throughout eternity. There is a church in heaven right now as the Lord is pleased to take his own from this world, that never stops worshiping. You know, we're going to break up here in a few minutes and all go our way. We'll be a church separated. We're a church gathered and we'll be a church separated, but there in glory, it never ceases. They continue around the throne to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

But just to show you, dear friends, just how great a privilege this is and this is why I began by saying this is the greatest wonder of the world, wonder of wonders that I should be included in this number. You know, there is an old preacher that wrote and said that there are going to be three wonders in heaven. He said there's the wonder that there will not be there some that you thought should be. You see, everybody thinks everybody is going to be in heaven but the wonder is going to be that some that you esteemed on this earth and looked at from an outward sense, perhaps you were just looking at them as good, kind, noble folks, yet that's not how it is that God brings people to glory and they will not be there. They will be among the lost. They will be among these that are described here where they "look upon the carcasses of men that have transgressed against me."

You see, that will be one wonder, but the second wonder this preacher said is the wonder that there will be some there that you thought would never be. You think about Saul of Tarsus, whoever was praying for him? I'm sure that in the flesh anybody that knew him personally was saying, "Take him out, Lord. Take him out." Because he was breathing out blasphemies and yet even those that he slew, can you imagine the wonder in heaven when he himself was executed and his soul ushered into the presence of the Lord and those around the throne. I don't know how that is. I think all the attention is going to be on the Lord himself but the wonder that such a one as he would be there.

But this preacher said the greatest wonder of all is that I should be there. I don't know if you think about that, but I think a lot about it. The greatest wonder of all is that God should save a sinner such as me and that I would be one of these going forth that would look upon the carcasses of men that have transgressed against him and as we look upon

them, stop and consider, "That could have been me. I deserved that end, that condemnation, and yet it pleased the Lord to save such as I am."

It says, "for their worm shall not die." You think about eternal condemnation described as where the worm shall not die. It's not a very good picture and yet it's in Scripture, but the picture is of a dead carcass laying out there, but imagine thousands of them exposed to the elements and the worms just coming up and eating away, eating away, eating away. You think about how long it takes a worm to eat a dead carcass and when that's done it goes to another one, but that's the picture of eternal condemnation.

"Neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." An abhorring. Can you imagine if it's an abhorring to all flesh what an abhorrence it is to God. We have yet to really understand the holiness of God, his justice in condemning sinners. It's like one lady asked the preacher one time, she said, "I just don't understand how it could be said God hated Esau," and yet the preacher responded, "I don't have any problem understanding how it is that God hated Esau, the wonder to me is that he could have loved Jacob."

There again is the wonder, the wonder that I can even stand here, dear friends, and talk to you in any measure about the glory of God in Christ. That's where his glory is, in the person of his Son, and that that death that he accomplished should cause me to be one of these that is offered unto the Lord in a clean vessel. I know that's not talking about my righteousness. If it's offered unto the Lord in a clean vessel, it's because Christ has made it clean. God has declared a sinner such as I am to be righteous and just before him based upon that and that's the only way it could be.

Let me just have you look over to a Scripture in Revelation 1 and this was really the title of the message but as the Lord has directed me, we're just now getting to it, but I've summed it for you. In Revelation 1, what is this church? What is this community of sinners that the Lord has gathered together from throughout the world? It's a royal priesthood. And how is it that any could be brought unto him as that offering acceptable unto him? Well, John writes here in Revelation 1:4, "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And," or even, "from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." There it is. That is how it is that any are made accepted before him. They were loved with an eternal love, but also washed. It took the coming, doing, dying and rising again of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, here it is verse 6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

That's who's described here in this last portion of the book of Isaiah. When he says, "And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites," that's what he's talking about. This matter of being washed in his blood, made accepted in the Beloved, and now being able to live to the glory and honor of Christ.

I read it for you in 1 Peter 2 and we'll come back here and then I'll close. 1 Peter 2. There is that chief cornerstone you see in verse 6, "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded," 1 Peter 2:6. "Unto you therefore which believe," in whom the Lord has put his Spirit to cause you to believe, "he is precious." That word "precious," it's not a sentimental word, actually it's the word "honorable; worthy; something that is priceless." You see, it doesn't have anything to do with, "Oh, he feels so precious to me." It's the idea there is no other name worthy of glory and honor than him.

"But unto them which be disobedient," that's these over here that are carcasses that have transgressed against him, "the stone which the builders disallowed." And how is it that builders today disallow? When they try to join in any way their works to him or their will to him in any way, anything that man has to contribute. "The same is made the head of the corner." It doesn't change the fact that he is the corner stone.

"And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." And it's of them that Isaiah writes here again, "the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me." There is no greater treason. "Whereunto," what? "They were appointed."

Now verse 9, do you see that little word "but"? How many times is it used in Scripture? "But," by way of contrast, "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation." How could it be said a holy nation? Well, this is that seed which the Lord would establish and their name remain that Isaiah wrote of there in Isaiah 66:22. A holy nation made so by this very righteousness that Christ, the very glory of God, came and earned, established and upon completion of his death, God imputed once for all to their account. Holy.

It says "a peculiar people." That word "peculiar" means "a particular people." It means actually in the deep sense of the word, "a ransomed people." That's the only way we could ever be accepted before God, a ransomed people.

What? "That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people." There was a time when God was dealing with that Jewish nation and passed by many other nations. It's in that sense. No one ever considered you to be a people.

"But are now the people of God." There are still some that read Isaiah 66 and try to find some physical future fulfillment in the Jewish nation, their glory as a nation being reestablished. That's how the Jews read it, I'll guarantee it, but if you ask me who are the people of God today? Well, Scripture says it's those that the Lord has shown mercy to, as it says there, "which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." It's those for whom Christ has paid the debt, Jew or Gentile. That's the true Israel of God. That's the true Zion. That's the true Jerusalem that is from above that Paul wrote to the Galatians about and that we find depicted in the book of Revelation.

Again, is there any greater wonder than that, that the Lord would be pleased to take sinners and save them for Christ's sake, but even a greater wonder that I should be or you should be named among that royal priesthood whom God has made so through his love, he has eternal love, having chosen those he would save, but never forget, washed in his blood. What a blessed privilege that is.