

Isaiah 66:12-24 (NKJV)

12 For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed; On *her* sides shall you be carried, And be dandled on *her* knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforts, So I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

14 When you see *this*, your heart shall rejoice, And your bones shall flourish like grass; The hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants, And *His* indignation to His enemies.

15 For behold, the LORD will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire.

16 For by fire and by His sword The LORD will judge all flesh; And the slain of the LORD shall be many.

17 "Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, *To go* to the gardens After an *idol* in the midst, Eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse, Shall be consumed together," says the LORD.

18 "For I *know* their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.

19 I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: *to* Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, *to* the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.

20 Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.

21 And I will also take some of them for priests *and* Levites," says the LORD.

22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain.

23 And it shall come to pass *That* from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD.

24 "And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

Remember that this chapter is about true and false worship. And Isaiah is still addressing both parties. Verses 12 – 14 address the true worshippers. He is talking to Judah and Jerusalem in this context. But we can see from the rest of the context that he is also talking to believers of all times.

¹² For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.

Have you ever heard the song- I've got peace like a river? This is where it came from. What is this peace? The listeners would have understood that they would receive abundant prosperity and welfare. And that it **comes in a river** would mean that it was a continual never ending supply. And along with this comes the resources of all the gentiles.

Now, in context, the Jews were a small insignificant group of people. The gentiles were everyone else. The gentiles were the threat to the Jewish people. But this promise is that the gentiles will be swarming into the Jewish world. Now they probably understood this politically. But ultimately it was spiritual.

What do we see now in our world? The gentiles far exceed the Jewish people as the children of God. And the peace that is being received like a river is peace with God.

The first century believers would have had trouble believing this. The Jewish apostles of Christ had trouble even allowing us heathens into their ranks. Paul and Barnabas were the spiritual mavericks who were shaking the pot of Christianity. The Jewish people saw this as **their thing**. It was an extension of their Jewishness. They would have never envisioned the world as it is now. The gentiles **vastly outnumber** the Jewish believers and the gentile leaders are the most influential leaders of the Christian faith.

We cannot understand what a strange thing this would be to the believers in Isaiah's day, or even in the new church at Jerusalem. But it is true none the less.

The Kingdom of God has surely received peace like a river. We have an overflowing river every day coming to us of **peace with God**. It is here all the time. We do not need to wait to visit the temple and sacrifice a sheep. All we need to do is confess our sins. That is all. It is simple.

And the church is primarily made up of Gentiles, of all those people who were previously the enemies of the Jewish people.

Then you shall feed; On *her* sides shall you be carried, And be dandled on *her* knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforts, So I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

This is a wonderful passage.

Do you sometimes feel like God is distant? Do you feel that no matter what you do you cannot receive His affirmation? Well those feelings are lies about God. Now you may be playing games with yourself. You may be lying to yourself about yourself. If that is the case you are robbing yourself of closeness to God. You can blame God. But ultimately it is your fault. But if you are confessing your sin and living by faith what this describes is God's relationship to you. It is described as a mother who loves her child. Now have you ever seen a greater love than that. All of us have seen mothers hold their kids on their side while they are trying to get other things done. We have all seen mothers hold children on their knees as they are speaking to them and relating to them and just loving them. And we have known of mothers feeding their babies from their own bodies.

Do you see this. This is the kind of love God is describing that **He** will provide **for His children**. It is remarkable. It is amazing. It is tender and compassionate. And it is **real**. It is just as tender and caring as any human relationship we have ever had.

And then in verse 13 it shifts to an older person. And it talks about the comfort we receive later in life from our mothers. It is certainly different than the younger years. But it is just as sincere and focused. It is a true love that looks out for our best interest, no matter what it may cost our mothers. We receive empathy and comfort. No one else may understand some of the situations we find ourselves in as well as our mothers. So they can grant a comfort more insightfully than anyone else. This is surely not true of every mother. But it is always true of the best of them. And that is what God is pointing to.

What is your view of God? Maybe it needs adjusted to the truth about God.

14 When you see *this*, your heart shall rejoice, And your bones shall flourish like grass; The hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants, And His indignation to His enemies.

One day there will be a perfect congruity between the world, as it really is, and how it appears. Right now there is a lot of confusion. Our world does not know lots of things. It can believe that **good is bad** and **bad is good**. It can think the devil's children represent God and God's children represent the devil. We cannot stop that.

But there is coming a day as real as today when everything will be seen exactly as it is and the people of God will break out in cheering. It will be, like was said in the 90's, SWEEEEETT

What God loves and what God hates will be seen clearly. Who He is for and who He is against will be seen clearly. Who will **live forever** in His kingdom and who will face **eternal punishment** will both be seen clearly.

That day is coming. We really don't need to trouble ourselves now with the continual misunderstanding the world has about spiritual things. God knows and He has not chosen to stop it yet. It is serving a purpose. But one day it will stop.

15 For behold, the LORD will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire.

16 For by fire and by His sword The LORD will judge all flesh; And the slain of the LORD shall be many.

17 "Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves, To go to the gardens After an *idol* in the midst, Eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse, Shall be consumed together," says the LORD.

The verse is first talking about a Jewish purging. But its ultimate fulfillment will be in the final judgment. Remember that we talked about offering sacrifices earlier in this text. And we talked about how doing the right things was not what God wanted. This judgment was in a Jewish context. And it still is.

Now we have the epitome of false worship. These people are sanctifying themselves. And we think- that is a good thing. Sanctification is the process of setting ourselves apart for God's use isn't it? Yes. When it is for the right God it is a wonderful thing. But in this case look what the sanctification is for.

Look what the purification is for.

To go to the gardens After an *idol* in the midst, Eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse,

These people are preparing themselves for idol worship. They are **doing for this idol** what should only be done for the **one true God**. And notice what happens. When a person serves another idol, that idol will always demand something of worth from the worshipper. The idols we have worshipped in the past have demanded things of great value from us, things we could never get back. And then they take us through a process of defilement instead of cleansing. They add dirt. They don't take any away. They add shame. They never remove shame.

Now do we really think the devil behind this process ever wanted to provide anything good to these false worshippers? Of course not. He is the destroyer. He is the accuser. He wants to harm. And he will use any bait that works to accomplish this.

We really need to get this. There is not a single temptation to sin that will ever give us what we really need. Never ever. It will only ever give you what you **think** you need, what you **feel** you need, what you **cannot imagine doing without**. But it will never ever give you what you **really** need.

I can understand the attraction to pork. But it is difficult to imagine the draw of eating a mouse. My guess is that it was part of the process because the devil could then show just **how far** he has **degraded** these poor suckers.

There often comes a point in our idolatry that the debasement no longer even appeals to the false worshipper.

It just leaves an awful feeling of "Oh no, I have done it again." And apart from the ministry of Christ and the truth of the gospel we are left with no hope whatsoever. How could any God love a person like us?

Now look at the destination of these people. Flames and sword. God has no issue with destroying those who refuse His love. God has no issue destroying those who will not repent. In some sense, He prefers that they would repent. But if He says "Here I am Here I am", and they say, I prefer my idol, He will obliterate them without remorse. After all, our God is a just God.

18 "For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.

We are surrounded by a lot of people who will not respond to God's call that appear to be much better people than we are. They are certainly nicer than I am. And we might be tempted to think that maybe God's judgement is a little askew. But this verse reveals the important fact. God not only knows everything **they do**. That might be impressive to us if we just knew everything a person did. But God knows everything **they think**. And that is where the truth comes out. Much of the goodness we see is really just human pride exhibiting itself. Some people may actually be acting out of a sense of moral superiority. They want to prove their wonderful selves to be wonderful selves. And at the bottom of it all is arrogance.

We do not know everything a person does. And we sure don't know everything a person thinks. But if we did we would see what it is that deserves God's judgment.

Now one day God will gather all humanity. And that, again, will be the day when everything is clear. Everything will be seen as it is. And the Carl Sagans and the Bill Mahers and the Hugh Hefners and the Nietsches of the world will

see the truth. These people who have slandered God and who have spoken arrogantly against God will see the glory of God and their mouths will be stopped.

We need never worry about those **who scoff at God**. They never get the final word. One day God will **scoff at them** and it will be worse than anything they ever imagined.

22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make¹⁹ I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.

20 Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.

21 And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the LORD.

Now these are the texts that we do the best we can with.

Vs 22 talks about the new heavens and the new earth. When will that happen? I believe it is after the judgment of mankind and the sending of the lost souls to hell. The new heavens and earth will be free of corruption.

So then what is the rest of the passage talking about?

Could this be a prophecy about what happened in Acts where the **persecution of the true worshippers** began by the **false worshippers of God**? Could there ever have been a **truer exhibition** of the people who claimed to represent God persecuting those who truly did represent God?

And what was the result? The Gospel was spread.

Where? The cities mentioned, if drawn on a map, take you westward in pretty much a strait line from the top boundary of Israel and eastward from the bottom boundary of Israel. What point do you think it would make if I asked you "what direction is a disease spreading?" and you pointed in both directions? I think **that** is the point to get. Those escaping persecution in Jerusalem went everywhere, and the gospel went with them.

And was the sign tongues? It very well could be. Tongues originally happened at Pentecost and then spread to the Gentile converts in that order. So it is very likely the sign of tongues being spoken of.

And verse 20 is wonderful. This verse is about us. We are our Jewish brethren's offering to the Lord. The word used for offering is not a bloody

sacrifice. It is the kind of offering that does not require blood. These sacrifices are living sacrifices.

And notice that they are called **brethren**. What a fight Paul had to make to get the Jewish believers to recognize this fact. Ephesians is a book that displays how hard that struggle was. We gentiles are brothers with the most pure-bred Jewish follower of Christ. Now, one might expect at this point we come in as a second class citizen. After all, a convert to the Jewish religion never reached the rights that a natural born Jew did in the temple worship. So do we get the cheap seats when the Jews get the seats behind the plate or the dugout?

There are no second class citizens in eternity. There may be those who allowed their faith to drive them to live for eternity's rewards more than earthly rewards so they are rewarded more richly. That would only be right. We can't hardly think that those faithless decisions we have made will not have abdicated eternal benefit. They have to result in absences of crowns we can cast at Christ's feet. And the faithful actions gain eternal rewards. None of us will complain, I am sure. But we are constantly encouraged to store up treasures in heaven. If we are commanded to do so, it must be doable.

Now verse 21 may be referring to either Jewish or Gentile people selected as Levites. If Jewish it might mean that those who are not Levites will be selected as such. That would be unusual. But if it is Gentiles, which I think it is, it would be earthshattering to any Jewish mindset.

And look at verse 20 at how they arrive at Jerusalem. They are riding just about anything that would carry them. I think the modes of transportation emphasizes the variety of peoples that will be coming to the kingdom. No one is left out.

I particularly like the fact that cars aren't mentioned. But we can't make too much of that.

Isaiah 66:22 (NKJV)

22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "So shall your descendants and your name remain.

God will always have a people. And forever it will be a combination of those He chose as a race and those who were later grafted in or adopted. And there will be no envy or stife, only peace like a river.

And God is here saying that the new eternal dwelling He created is for a purpose. It is to **house His people forever**. God will have people forever. And He truly has prepared a place for them. And this new Jerusalem will come out of heaven, all ready for the people of God to dwell together.

Now the drum roll of the book is drumming and we are coming to the culmination of God's words through the prophet Isaiah. We are preparing to move to our next field of study.

There is something very interesting here.

I don't know if our culture is abnormally averse to negative things. Maybe it is true of every culture. But God mixes the positive and the negative with great regularity. He uses contrast constantly. And He is about to do it again.

In the sections of Isaiah's writing he consistently ended the sections with the fact that **the wicked had no peace**. And we see that again here. We need to take note of that. It must be important for us to know and think about. Maybe it is to protect us from the seduction of wickedness. Maybe it is fuel to keep us from envying the wicked. Or maybe it is for us to fully get the point that God will ultimately be glorified and no other influence will be allowed to interfere.

²³ And it shall come to pass *That* from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD.

Now this brings up a question in my mind. Scripture tells us that Christ will be the light in the New Jerusalem. How will we know when the Sabbath is? And the new heaven and earth must have a moon.

I don't think it pays to get too dogmatic on any of the points of the specifics of the new earth because I think much of it is beyond our realm of imagination. But it is interesting.

And what is verse 23 saying? Is it saying that on each of these events people will come before God to worship Him? Or is it saying that people will be coming to worship Him all the time. All flesh is coming all the time to worship Him. I don't know which is true. But one thing I am sure of. There will be no shortage of worship of God. We will not need to long for **the day** of worship. We will have entered into God's rest for eternity.

Think about the implications. Everyone will come to worship God and will thrill to worship God. We will no longer need to keep a vigilant eye on each other to make sure we don't fall into sin. Rebuke and reconciliation will no longer be a factor. There will be a unity of purpose that we simply cannot imagine now. Peace like a river will overtake us and surround us. No more doctrinal disputes and concern for doctrinal error. The elders and fathers and mothers can get the break they sometimes long for. It will be amazing.

Now I believe all of us would like this passage to end here. We want it to end in this amazing picture of peace and love and fellowship.

But God in His sovereignty did not choose for it to end there. Do any of us really want to criticize His choice. This is how He ended the book.

24 "And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

Now I have no idea how this will be experienced, or when. It looks like a continual thing here. And we wonder how can eternity be so wonderful if this is part of it? And I cannot answer that question.

Some things we are not given answers to.

But we must understand the dangers of turning our hearts from Christ. It is deadly. We cannot allow our hearts to stray after the things of this earth. We can not allow our fantasies of the wonderful things we can have distract us from our eternal rest. The picture in verse 24 is the culmination of idolatry. The picture is what happens when humans go their own way. That is not how our movies and media portray it. Following our hearts only leads to wonderful things in our fiction. But in reality it leads to corpses and punishment. We cannot believe our world's message. The world lies. This picture in vs 24 is the end.

Our eternal reward and the unbeliever's eternal punishment are both presented with great clarity. We need to consider this danger. We need it in our minds to gain a full grasp of our reality. God did not include this for some kind of shock factor. This is a reality to be avoided at any cost. Any cost. And this is the reality that many of our associates on this planet are facing. Will we pray for them? Will we ask God to provide us opportunities to share the good news? And will we commit ourselves to absolute surrender to the will of our Father?

Isaiah has been calling to us since March 5 of 2017. So it is over 2 years now. Our idols and fears and trust have been thoroughly addressed. We have been called to a true worship of God. I pray that none of his message has been lost on you and me. And that we have become a body of believers that more thoroughly glorify Christ now than we did when we began.