

A Trek Through Isaiah 52 - 56:1-12

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For this week: Looking backward, Looking forward 56-66, The waiting people 56:1-8

Looking backward (Map of the Book)

Looking forward 56 - 66 The Book of the Conqueror

- Introduction (from J. Alec Motyer)
 - In Isaiah's prophecy up to this point
 - Through Cyrus, Israel has been returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.
 - However, they are the same people as when they left.
 - No spiritual transformation
 - They have not taken possession of the Servant's victory.
 - As Isaiah warned them in 48:22: No peace for the wicked
 - No Davidic ruler
 - Ruled by local governors under a pagan king.
 - All the royal promises are true but not yet fulfilled. (Is 9:1-6; Is 11:1-9; 32:1-8; 33:17-24)
 - In 56 - 66 Isaiah describes the community
 - Inadequate leaders 56:9-12
 - Spiritually divided (57:1-2; 59:14-15; 65:11-12)
 - The apostates: false religion (57:3-13; 65:3-7)
 - The faithful: a deep sense of sin (59:1-15) and spiritual longing (64:1-2)
 - Then he answers the longing with glorious promises
 - Yahweh Himself will intervene (59:16-19; 66:14-16)
 - He will bring healing, peace (57:15-21), provision (65:13-16)
 - Zion will become glorious
 - The focal point of all the earth (60; 62; 66:7-13, 17-24)
 - The center of the new creation (65:17-24)
 - Central to all is the third messianic figure: the coming Conqueror (59:20-21; 61:1-3; 61:10 - 62:7; 63:1-6)
 - A New Testament parallel
 - With Christ's birth, the promised King arrived. (Lk 1:31-33)
 - With His death and resurrection, the saving work of the Servant was completed. Now He sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father. (Heb 10:12)
 - But His kingship is not yet realized on the earth: the world rulers of this darkness are active (Eph 6:12) and His people see Him only dimly (1 Cor 13:12).
 - The world awaits the return of the King as Conqueror, when every knee will bow and acknowledge Him as Lord (Ph 2:9-11), and His people will become like Him because they see Him clearly as He is. (1 Jn 3:2)

- Map of the Section
 - The Ideal and the Actual 56:1 - 59:13
 - The waiting people 56:1-8: The faithful awaiting a glorious future
 - The divided people 56:9 - 57:21: The present situation: inadequate leaders, the apostates, the faithful.
 - Ineffective religion 58:1-14: The present practice vs the ideal practice
 - The guilty people 59:1-13: The present practice and confession of guilt and helplessness
 - The Work Accomplished 59:14 - 63:6
 - Situation and remedy 59:14-21: The situation of Yahweh's people and His remedy
 - The universal city 60:1-22: Zion glorified
 - The Anointed One and His transforming work 61:1-11: Zion's people transformed.
 - The Anointed One and His gathered people 61:10 - 62:12: Israel and the nations gathered
 - Consummation of the work 63:1-6: Vengeance, redemption, salvation completed
 - The New Heavens and New Earth: Prayers and Promises 63:7 - 66:24
 - The watcher prays 63:7 - 64:12: In 62:6 watchmen were posted to remind Yahweh; here one prays.
 - Yahweh responds 65:1 - 66:24: Yahweh answers the watchman's prayer..

The Ideal and the Actual 56:1 - 59:13

The waiting people 56:1-8

Isaiah 56:1–8 (LSB): Thus says Yahweh, “Keep justice and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed.

2 “How blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who takes hold of it, Who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to Yahweh say, “Yahweh will surely separate me from His people.” Nor let the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”

4 For thus says Yahweh, “To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant,

5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

6 “Also the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh, To minister to Him, and to love the name of Yahweh, To be His slaves, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And takes hold of My covenant,

7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them glad in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”

8 Lord Yahweh, who gathers the banished of Israel, declares, “Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.”

- V1-2 Expectant waiting; resulting blessing
 - Keep justice and do righteousness
 - Keep justice. Take possession of God's law.
 - Do righteousness. Live in accordance with God's law.
 - As Is 51:1 Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek Yahweh:
 - Not salvation by works but showing salvation by works.
 - As 1 Jn 2:28: And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He is manifested, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.
 - For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed.
 - About to come. At Jesus in Mk 1:15 The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.
 - My salvation. The freedom from sin won by the Servant.
 - My righteousness. God's righteous purpose.
 - Our living hope as 1 Pet 1:3 According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
 - How blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who takes hold of it
 - Biblical ethics: Right living now based on future hope, bringing blessing.
 - Does this...takes hold of it. As v1.
 - Who keeps from profaning the sabbath,
 - Reordering his life according to his faith. Represents the first part of the Ten Commandments which regulate the relationship between man and God.
 - Entering into God's rest. As Ex 23:12 Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your maidservant, as well as your sojourner, may refresh themselves.
 - and keeps his hand from doing any evil.
 - Represents the second part of the Ten Commandments which regulate the relationships among men

- V3-8 All-embracing inclusiveness
 - Foreigners...eunuchs.
 - Righteousness and justice in v1-2 illustrated by two examples
 - Foreigners could be included under OT law (Ex 12:48) but in practice were excluded.
 - Eunuchs were excluded under the law (Dt 23:1). But the Servant's work has satisfied the law, thus grace can be extended.
 - who has joined himself to Yahweh.
 - The way to blessing: to voluntarily join themselves to Yahweh.
 - To the eunuchs
 - keep my Sabbaths
 - Choose what pleases Me
 - hold fast My covenant
 - For the foreigners
 - join themselves to Yahweh
 - to minister to Him,
 - to love the name of Yahweh,
 - to be his slaves,
 - keeps from profaning the Sabbath.
 - takes hold of my covenant
 - Not for their benefit but to serve Yahweh
 - As Ruth in Ruth 1:16-17 But Ruth said, "Do not press me to forsake you in turning back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may Yahweh do to me, and more, if anything but death separates you and me."
 - Contrast Ezra 4:1-3 Then the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to Yahweh, the God of Israel, so they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here." But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to Yahweh, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us."
 - They came not to join but as adversaries.
 - Command not to lose hope
 - The foreigner is not to say, "Yahweh will surely separate me from His people."
 - The eunuch is not to say, "Behold I am a dry tree."
 - Both will be blessed

- Promised rewards tailored to each person
 - For the eunuch who could not have a descendent to carry on his name
 - in my house and within my walls.
 - A place in God's family
 - Access to God's presence
 - a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters;
 - Better than what they had lost.
 - an everlasting name which will not be cut off.
 - Eternal security.
 - For the foreigner from another nation
 - I will bring to my holy mountain,
 - Permitted to come near and brought near by the Holy Spirit
 - (I will) make them glad in my house of prayer;
 - Rejoicing in a speaking relationship with God
 - Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar;
 - Access to the ordinances that bring atonement.
- Yet others I will gather to them
 - Yahweh's gathering is not done until the elect are gathered from every nation and tribe and tongue.
 - Note the order: (1) Israel (2) the nations
 - As spoken to the Servant in Is 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to cause the preserved ones of Israel to return; I will also give You as a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
 - As spoken by Jesus in Jn 10:16 "And I have other sheep, which are not from this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

The divided people 56:9 - 57:21

- Structure
 - Down from the heights of vision. Back to the realities of the present world.
 - Failure of the leaders 56:9-12
 - Leaders who do not come close to the ideal of the promised Davidic monarchy.
 - The prostitute's brood and Yahweh's household 57:1-21
 - Conflict between those who have apostatized to the cults and those who are faithful to Yahweh.
 - Those who are faithful know Yahweh's presence and guidance, and are destined for peace.
 - Those who fall away are abandoned to their idols and know no peace.

Failure of the leaders 56:9-12

Isaiah 56:9–12 (LSB)

9All you beasts of the field, All you beasts in the forest, Come to eat.

10His watchmen are blind; All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber;

11And the dogs have a strong appetite; they do not know satisfaction. And they are shepherds who do not know understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one to his greedy gain, to the last one.

12“Come,” they say, “let us take wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink; And tomorrow will be like today—beyond exceedingly great.”

- Picture of a flock in the care of shepherds and watchdogs who are worthless.
- A feast with unexpected guests
 - Israel’s leaders presently devouring (v11-12)
 - Israel’s enemies called to devour (v9)
 - Come...come.
 - Inclusio v9, 12
 - Israel’s self-indulgent rulers feast; they are unaware that others have been invited.
- V9 The beasts
 - Beasts of the field...beasts in the forest. Israel’s enemies, either external or internal.
 - Come to eat. Called to chasten people complacent in their election.
- Two views of failed spiritual leadership
- V10 Sleeping watchmen
 - Watchmen are appointed to warn of approaching danger.
 - Israel’s watchmen have failed
 - all...all. 2x for emphasis.
 - Blind...know nothing. Ignorant of the situation.
 - Mute...unable to bark. Cannot warn.
 - Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber
 - Loving sleep
 - Lost in their own dreams

- V11-12 Greedy shepherds
 - Shepherds are appointed to care for their flock
 - Israel's shepherd care for themselves.
 - strong appetite,,,do not know satisfaction
 - Never satisfied.
 - Note how the incompetent watchdogs of v10 become the insatiable street dogs of v11.
 - 2 Ki 9:33-35 describes street dogs devouring the body of Jezebel. Only the skull, feet, palms of her hands remained.
 - Do not know understanding. Of their Goe or their situation.
 - All turned to their own way, each to his greedy gain. Selfish
 - V12 may be a drinking song of the day.
 - tomorrow will be like today. Accountable to no one. Expressing contempt for the prophets who warned them of the wrath to come.
 - Ezekiel condemns the leaders of Israel in Ez 34:8 "As I live," declares Lord Yahweh, "surely because My flock has become plunder, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not seek for My flock, but rather the shepherds shepherded themselves and did not shepherd My flock;
 - Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-30 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Application: Not separated

We are foreigners. In 56:3 how can we say that Yahweh will not separate us from His people.,

- The Servant is a Savior for the nations
 - Is 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to cause the preserved ones of Israel to return; I will also give You as a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
- We have been brought near by the blood of Christ
 - Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

In 56:6, since we are among Yahweh's people, what are we to do

- Join ourselves to Him
- Minister to Him
- Love His name
- Be His slave
- Not profane the Sabbath
- Take hold of His covenant

In 56:7, what will be the result?

- Glad in His house of prayer
- Offerings and sacrifices accepted on His altar (priests)

References

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