

Bible Study # 51
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Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 50—66

We are dealing with a wrap-up of the book of Isaiah—chapters 50-66, the concluding chapters of the book of Isaiah. This particular section **deals with prophecies that almost entirely look forward to the time of the Messiah.** There are a lot of details given concerning Christ's first coming and His crucifixion in Isaiah 53, as well as 50 and 52. This section gives some of the most detailed prophecies of His scourging and subsequent execution. The events and reasons surrounding these actions are given in the material we are covering this evening. The Jews did not understand these things. They did not understand this at the time these events occurred and they really have no real idea of the meaning of this section of Scripture to this day.

Acts 8:27-39 is a good illustration of the lack of understanding that the Jews had as to the meaning of this section of Scripture. We have the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was an individual of great ability and obviously he was one of the major leaders in the nation of Ethiopia. He was right under the Queen in charge of the treasury. He was a highly educated man, and like many of the upper class and educated class of Ethiopians of his day, he practiced the religion of Judaism.

A number of the upper-class Ethiopians had practiced the religion of Judaism from the time going back to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon (I Kings 10). The leadership of the Ethiopian people practiced many aspects of the religion of Judaism. In fact, Ethiopia and their connection with Scripture and with the level of understanding that was maintained there is probably a major factor in why Ethiopia is the only place in Africa that was never colonized. It has maintained its independence from the time of antiquity. Until the death of King Helai Selassie, the royal line of Ethiopia traced itself from generation to generation for 3,000 years of unbroken succession.

This leader from Ethiopia had been to Jerusalem. Being able to travel to Jerusalem was evidence of wealth and education. It was a long trip. He had come there to worship and he was returning. He was in his chariot, which was being driven by a servant that he had. He was sitting there reading the book of Isaiah. He was reading this

section of Scripture from Isaiah 53 and he did not understand what it meant. His lack of understanding was not due to his lack of education. It was simply due to the fact that the Jewish community did not understand this section of Scripture. This man, who had been up to the temple to worship in observance of one of the Festivals, was not able to understand it because nobody had ever been able to explain it to him before. The Jewish religious leadership, the priests, none of them understood it. This is brought out. This Ethiopian man in Acts 8 was reading Isaiah the prophet and he was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8.

He asked Philip who the prophet was speaking of. Who was this individual that was being described in this prophecy? Philip began to explain to him about Jesus Christ. This eunuch did not know that. The Ethiopians did not know and understand because it was not known and understood in the circles of Jewish religion then—nor do the Jews understand to this day.

We are going to notice some very specific prophecies of Jesus Christ and what He was going to do. In this section, we also have some fairly specific and detailed prophecies of the Millennium. It goes into how Israel will be restored and the way that it will be brought about. In this section, God also focuses on the requirements of individual religion. God continually flashes back, as it were, on the requirements of individual religion if it is to be acceptable in God's sight.

Isaiah 50:2, God brings out, "...Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst." God describes what He is capable of doing. He says the problems and punishments that Israel has are not because of God's lack of ability to deliver them.

Verses 5-7, "The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, nor did I turn away. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed." This is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. This is a prophecy of His smiting and His scourging.

Isaiah 51:1, we are told, "...Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug." In other words,

look back to our origin; look back from where we came.

Verse 2, “Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you....”

Verse 3, “For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort the waste places....” God is going to bring comfort. He is going to bring relief to His people, nationally and spiritually. He is going to comfort Zion. He is going to comfort the nation of Israel. Continuing, “...He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord....” The land of Israel will be healed; it will be restored.

Verses 4-5, “Listen to Me, My people; and give ear to Me, O My nation: for law will proceed from Me, and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples. My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth....” God is going to make waste places blossom and through His righteous law, He will make the whole land rejoice. In that way, he will provide comfort to His people, to Zion. We go through God’s comforting of Zion and some of the events that will transpire.

Isaiah 52 describes the work of God.

Isaiah 52:7-8, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns! Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord brings back Zion.”

Here we see a description of God’s work. The Church is described as bringing the Gospel. It very thoroughly describes the Gospel message—the good tiding that publishes (proclaims) peace, publishes salvation and announces the establishment of God’s government. How descriptive can you get to the New Testament message—the Good News of the Kingdom of God—which Jesus Christ came proclaiming? It describes the work of those going forth as a messenger. Maybe you never thought of yourself as having beautiful feet, but verse 7 shows that, at least by analogy. It describes it in that way because feet are what the messenger walks on. It is descriptive of going forth with a job to do, doing that job and announcing that message.

There is a very strong admonition that God gives to those in His work.

Verse 11, “Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.” If we’re going to do the work of God, if

we’re going to be God’s people, we must be clean. We must not be tainted and polluted by the uncleanness of this world and society. We live in a society that God describes as unclean. We’re told that if we are going to carry on the work of God, we are to be clean.

In ancient Israel, the priests of God had laws that regulated ritual cleanness. There were laws that regulated things. If the priests came in contact with something that made them ceremonially unclean, they could not serve in the temple. Basically, the things they came in contact with were things that would physically pollute them. If they touched a dead body or an unclean animal, they were unclean. What it meant to be ritually unclean was that they had to go and take a bath, wash their clothes and wait for the end of the day before they could come back in. This was to impress upon them the importance of cleanness. And if you are unclean, what you touch becomes unclean also.

This lesson was impressed in the ceremonies the priests went through. The priests and the Levites were the ones who, literally, bore the vessels of the Eternal. They bore the vessels there in the temple and the temple worship. There were strict regulations given about the importance of their being clean. These lessons were really written to teach the principle of cleanness and the importance of being clean, if we’re going to fulfill God’s work in a way that is pleasing to Him.

We, today, are spiritually “bearing the vessels of the Lord”; we are doing the work of God. That’s what that meant—doing God’s work. We are doing God’s work. If ritual uncleanness made them unacceptable in God’s sight to carry that out, how much more would moral and spiritual uncleanness make us unfit in God’s sight to carry out God’s work. If we’re going to carry out the work of God, we have to be clean. We have to uphold God’s standards. This is a part of the message that Christ had.

Let’s notice some information concerning Christ’s scourging. There are several prophecies concerning Christ’s scourging.

Verse 13, “Behold, My Servant....” It describes Him as God’s Servant.

Verse 14, “Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” It describes His visage as being marred. It describes Him in the aftermath of that beating. He was virtually unrecognizable.

I remember someone, a number of years ago in Corpus Christi, Texas, who had been through an automobile accident—a man who later went on to become a local elder. If you've ever seen someone who's been through an automobile accident, you know what I mean. God certainly can and does intervene and that was a very remarkable case. It made a very vivid impression in my mind.

It describes here Jesus Christ being marred more than any man. Many were astonished at Him. His visage was marred more than any man. After the beating He was unrecognizable. Even those who knew Him would not have been able to recognize Him. When He was resurrected, Mary Magdalene stood there and thought He must be the gardener (John 20:14-15). She did not recognize who He was until He spoke to her. At that point, He manifested Himself in the way He had been as a result of that beating rather than in the form that would have been totally recognizable to her.

Isaiah 53:3-5, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we esteem Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

This shows what Jesus Christ went through. The word translated “grief” is a word that is in almost every case in the Old Testament (other than here and one or two other places), a word that is normally translated “pain” or “disease.” What we see here is that Jesus Christ died for our sins. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Through His sacrifice we have access to God; through that access to God, we have access to all of the benefits God offers and extends to His people. Access to God is made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It culminated in His death.

Verse 6, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” That is made plain. He died for us, for the sins of the world.

Verse 8, “He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken.” He died for us.

Verses 9-10, “And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You made His soul [His life] an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days....” He was resurrected.

Verse 12, “...because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” He died for the sins of the people. He was executed with criminals, buried with the rich and raised from the dead. These aspects of His sacrifice are all made evident here. We have the description of His scourging, how He was brutally beaten with stripes. His countenance was totally disfigured.

Verse 7, He didn't answer His accusers. We are told how He was like a sheep brought to the slaughter. As a sheep before His shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He went through all of these things to suffer in our stead.

Isaiah 54 describes God's relationship with Israel and Israel's redemption.

Isaiah 54:5, “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.” It describes God's redemption.

Isaiah 55:6-8, “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thought are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord.”

We are to seek God while He is accessible. We have the opportunity right now to seek Him. He is near and He is available. We are told not to procrastinate and put it off. There are events coming—the tribulation and the Day of the Lord. There are things that are going to transpire. We are told to seek God and to draw near to Him. We are told the way to do that. We are told to change both our actions and the way we think. It's not enough simply to change what you do. It is not enough for the wicked to forsake his ways, but rather, we must forsake our thoughts. The reason is because our thoughts are not God's thoughts nor, for that matter, are our ways His ways.

Our ways are a reflection of our thoughts. Our actions reflect our thinking and if we are going to

make fundamental change in our life, we have to change not merely the outward action, we have to change the inward thought. We have to change the way we think. Otherwise, what we have is mere external conformity—people that just go along. You can comply with what the Church says in doing this or doing that (or not doing this or that), but if you don't change the way you think, you won't understand why you're doing it other than, well, the Church says you shouldn't do this or that. People go along and they make external conformity, but they never make internal change. And if the pressure to conform is taken off, they go back to being the way they were because they never learned to think any differently. I think that's fundamental. It is something we have to understand. God is not concerned merely about what we do. More fundamentally than what we do, He is concerned about what we are and what we think on the inside.

The Pharisees conformed to all kinds of things outwardly. Now God is concerned about what we do in the sense that you can't be right on the inside and wrong on the outside. I think we understand that. You can't be keeping the spirit of the law on the inside and outwardly be murdering, raping, pillaging, stealing, committing adultery, taking God's name in vain, breaking the Sabbath and all these things. I think we all understand that. You can outwardly be keeping the various points of the law and conforming to what we are told, but inwardly be something else.

Many people conform to what the law requires. They even conform to what man's law requires out of fear of the trouble they would get into if they don't. But if they thought they could get by with it, they would do it. That's not the kind of attitude that God wants to perpetuate forever. That's why He said to not only change your action but to change your thoughts because 'your thoughts aren't My thoughts.'

What are our thoughts? Human nature kind of follows the line of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. That's what makes up a large part of human nature and human reaction. The thoughts of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed come naturally to the natural man. That's what people tend to be motivated by. Advertisers know that; that's why they appeal to vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. These things sell. That's not the way God thinks and He wants us to exchange our way of thinking to His way of thinking.

In verse 11, God explains that His word will not return to Him void. What God says will be accomplished.

In Isaiah 56, God addresses the importance of keeping the Sabbath—the importance of *all* keeping the Sabbath regardless of background or whatever circumstance. The Sabbath is not simply for the Jew.

Isaiah 56:2-3, “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.’ Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, ‘The Lord has utterly separated me from His people....’” God says blessed is the man that does this, not simply the Jew, but the man, the person, the human being. The “son of the foreigner” (KJV, “stranger”) would apply to someone who is not a native-born Israelite. It would be someone who is not born physically of the seed of Abraham; it would be a Gentile.

God says, ‘Regardless of your ethnic heritage, regardless of anything, when you obey Me, when you embrace My ways and you serve Me, you are acceptable in My sight.’ You are not somehow separated off into some separate spiritual category. Physical factors are not the basis of spiritual categories. Spiritual categories, basically, come down to those who obey and those who don't. And nobody has a “leg-up” because of ethnic origin, wealth, education, position, social status or anything else whatever it may be. Those may be physical factors in physical society, but God looks on the heart to judge human beings. God looks to the one who is humble and trembles at His word (Isaiah 66:2).

Here, in Isaiah 56:2-4, it specifically mentions the Sabbath as an outward sign and how God counts as His own those who obey Him and take this outward sign of the Sabbath, regardless of other physical factors.

We are told that through obedience, anyone—Gentiles, eunuchs—can become part of God's covenant people and share in His blessings. The Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in Acts 8 is an example of one who, in that sense, fits both categories that are mentioned here—the son of the stranger and the eunuch. The Ethiopian eunuch was a man singled out to be mentioned in a positive light. We will, undoubtedly, have the opportunity to meet him in Tomorrow's World as a part of the firstfruits of God's plan. There have been many, but he is singled out as a literal fulfillment. We've read his account earlier and it

describes one who obeys God and is therefore counted as one of God's people.

Then there is the statement that Christ quoted in the New Testament.

Verse 7, "...For My house shall be called a house of prayer for *all nations*." This is quoted in Matthew 21:13.

God characterizes the leadership of the nation as being, in effect, blind, asleep on the job and consumed by greed.

Verses 10-11, "His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough...."

This is a rather apt description. If you've ever seen a bunch of dogs trying to eat, you will realize that they can be the personification of greed. They all "muscle" in there and try to suck it up like a vacuum cleaner. God uses these vivid descriptions to describe human beings. He describes watchmen who are blind. They are like dogs that have lost their ability to bark. They've gone to sleep. And yet they are greedy dogs. God says the watchmen of Israel are that way.

Then a point to consider: why God allows some of the righteous to die before their time.

Isaiah 57:1, "The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil." He is taken away from the evil to come. So, in some cases, God allows that.

Who is going to dwell with God?

Verse 15, "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

In Isaiah 66:2, God describes those who are going to be a part of His Family as those who are humble, contrite and who really tremble at His word—those who really take God seriously. God is not impressed with people who are impressed with themselves. It is a matter of recognizing our dependence upon God and humbly seeking Him. That is the way to have access to God and to dwell with God.

God give His ministry and His work a commission.

Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

In other words, we have not been commissioned to play a lullaby and put the world to sleep, but

rather, we have to play revelry to wake them up. That's what God wants His work to do. That's what God holds His work responsible for; it's what He holds His ministry responsible for.

It will ultimately be part of the basis of what He is going to use to judge us upon. We all are judged for our areas of responsibility. You are judged for your areas of responsibility; I am judged for my areas of responsibility. If I just kind of play a lullaby, speak smooth things and prophesy deceits, if I just kind of go along and put you all spiritually to sleep, then I am ultimately going to have to give an account to God for that because His calling is that He wants the ministry and His work to, figuratively speaking, play revelry—to play "wake up" on the bugle. God wants the ministry and His work to sound the trumpet, to sound the alarm, to say, 'Hey, it's time to wake up and to go forth.' There is that responsibility.

God describes a people who are going through the outward motions of religion but are not accompanied by the inward change, the inward things.

Verse 3-5, He describes the kind of fasting that God takes note of. It describes a people who fast, but their fasting is in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons. God describes the kind of fasting that He is after.

Verse 4, "Indeed you fast for strife and debate...." We don't fast to get our own way.

Verses 6-7, "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the cords of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"

In other words, we are to fast in order to get our lives straightened out. We fast to make changes. Fasting is for the purpose of drawing close to God and seeing ourselves. Fasting is for getting the spiritual strength to cut the things that bind us to wickedness, that bind us to sins. We are to cut the ties to sin. We are to be cut free from sin and to get the help to make the changes that we need to make.

Verses 9-10, God does not want us simply pointing the finger at others and speaking wickedness (KJV, "vanity"), but rather, of having an attitude of giving, serving and helping.

Let's notice what God says about the Sabbath.

Verses 13-14, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My

holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

We are to turn away our foot from trampling God’s Sabbath. It means we are not to be doing our own pleasure or pursuing our own interest and our own endeavors. Some translations render it “business”—not doing your own business on the Sabbath. But that can be misunderstood. Some have read it that way and have misunderstood it to mean your regular job. They say, ‘Well, if I’m not doing my regular job, it doesn’t matter what else I do.’ That’s not what it means. It says, ‘from doing my own pleasure.’ That doesn’t mean that if you enjoy it, it is sin.

God says that we should call the Sabbath a delight. It should be a delight and we should delight ourselves by a proper focus. It’s not a day to pursue our own interests and endeavors. It is not a day to pursue secular recreation and entertainment. It is not a day to go to the ball game or to lay up watching television—the Saturday cartoons or whatever is on. I assume that’s what is still on; at least it was 25 years ago. The point is that whatever is being pursued, it should be in conformity with making the Sabbath a delight, a holy day of the Lord and honorable—showing honor and respect to God.

That doesn’t mean you sit in the corner or closet and don’t eat all day. There is nothing wrong with eating a meal and having a meal of fellowship with brethren or something of that sort. We should enjoy the fellowship and the company of one another as God’s children fellowshiping together. But it’s not a time for secular pursuits, secular entertainment and recreation. Even things that are not necessarily wrong, of and by themselves, but they’re not things you would do on God’s time, and the Sabbath is God’s time.

If you work for someone, on the boss’s time, there are certain things you don’t do (at least you’re not supposed to do), not because those things are always wrong, but because they’re not things you would do on his time. Well the Sabbath is God’s time and He gives us certain things as to the way that He wants us to deal with it.

In Isaiah 59, God brings out the biggest factor as to why sometimes God does not seem to answer.

It brings out that, when the answer is held back, the problem is never God’s inability to respond.

Isaiah 59:1-2, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” Our iniquities can separate us from God. If God doesn’t answer, the problem is not that God is unable to respond. There may be factors that interfere with our closeness to God and our access to God.

In verse 4, it describes the iniquities of the nation and how none calls for justice.

Verse 7, “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood....”

Verse 8, “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways.” It describes the tragedies that beset much of our nation.

Isaiah 60 describes the restoration of Israel under God’s government in the Millennium. It describes many of the gentile nations who were part of the Beast power that took Israel captive and how they are going to come and begin the Millennium as servants of the restored nation of Israel. They are going to have certain lessons to learn.

Isaiah 60:10, ““The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you.””

Verse 12, ““For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.”” They’re going to have an attitude of service. There will be a willingness to serve and learning to serve. Many of these nations are going to have that lesson brought to them. They are going to be taught that.

Verse 5, ““Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.”” God mentions the wealth that is going to be restored to Israel.

There is an interesting statement. He talks about the abundance of the sea to be turned to you. Do you realize that even a few years ago, Dow Chemical manufactured over 500 items from seawater? How can the abundance of the sea be converted? One cubic mile of seawater stores over 175 billion tons of dissolved chemicals that are worth upwards of 30 to 50 billion dollars. Just one cubic mile of sea water—maybe around 30 billion dollars—a substantial amount. Several

hundred million of that would be gold alone in just one cubic mile of seawater. "...the abundance of the sea will be converted to you and the wealth of the Gentiles will come unto you." There's a lot involved there.

Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives...."

This is what Jesus read in Luke 4:16-20 as prophetic of His mission to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Verse 4, "And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities...." That's going to happen in the beginning of the Millennium. The cities will be rebuilt.

Verses 5-6, many of those who have taken Israel captive are going to learn to serve in the beginning of the Millennium by coming back in that way as servants.

Israel will finally set an example.

Isaiah 62:2, "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory...."

It describes what God is going to do.

Isaiah 63:4 describes the day of vengeance of God, the day of the Lord. It describes some of the events dealing with that.

There is a plea for Christ to return and for God to establish His government.

Isaiah 64:1-2, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!"

Notice what God has to say about our human righteousness.

Verse 6, "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf...." On our own, we can't become what Christ would have us be. It's not our own humanly devised righteousness. It's not what we can do, of and by ourselves. It's what God can do in us and through us.

In verse 8, we are told that God is the Potter and we are the clay, the work of His hands. We are to be shaped and molded by Him. We are not to take on conformity to the image of this world and this society, but we are to be molded, shaped and refashioned by God to reflect Him.

Isaiah 65 describes God dealing with our nation and with our people.

Isaiah 65:2-5, "I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts; A people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face...." A people who do everything I told them not to do. Continuing, "...who sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves, and spend the night in the tombs; who eat swine's flesh, and the broth of abominable things is in their vessels; who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!' These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day."

After they do all these things, they say, 'Don't come near me; I am holier than thou.' That's not an attitude that God is pleased with. God says, 'I am not going to put up with that.' This kind of attitude is offensive to God. God takes note of people who provoke Him to anger by pursuing all the things they shouldn't and then culminating with an attitude of looking down on their neighbor, an attitude of condemnation.

Verse 20, "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed." What does that have reference to? The indication is that we are looking at a time at the conclusion of the Millennium. The time setting of Isaiah 65 is at the end of the Millennium.

Verse 17, it is a time setting when God is going to create a new heavens and a new earth. The time described here is at the conclusion of the Millennium, the conclusion of the White Throne Judgment period and right on the threshold of eternity.

In verse 20, we arrived at a point in human history when there will be no infants, no children. There won't be anyone who has not fulfilled his days. It describes here a 100-year period. It describes the child living to age 100, but the one who is still a sinner, at age 100, he will be accursed. It is from this verse that we have come to derive the understanding that we know there will be children born during the Millennium. We also know that at the end of the Millennium, at the time of the White Throne Judgment, there's a time when all people will be resurrected and will be given an opportunity for salvation.

There has to come a point at which no new children are born because, otherwise, how can everything physical pass away and everything that is spiritual remain? There will come a time

when there will be no more children born. And all of those who have been born will have an opportunity to grow to adulthood. When will that be? That is after the Millennium and during the White Throne Judgment period. How long will it last? The indication of Isaiah 65:20 is that the White Throne Judgment period will last 100 years, and we have described here what it's going to be like.

Verse 25, "...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," says the Lord." It will be a time of peace.

We conclude here with chapter 66. We see that God is not impressed with the mere form of religion.

Isaiah 66:1-2, "Thus says the Lord: 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool, where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,' says the Lord...." I have made everything. Continuing, "...But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

Then, in verses 3-4, He describes those who go through the outward form of religion, sacrifices and things of that sort. The sacrifices, the outward forms of religion by the disobedient, are an abomination to God. God looks to basic attitude and motivation. God is not impressed with outward form unless it is accompanied by inward substance. For someone to hypocritically go through the outward motions of religion and yet not to be as they should be is offensive in God's sight.

Verse 3, "...Just as they have chosen their own ways...."

Verse 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." The focus is on the Sabbath. This is showing clearly that the Sabbath will be kept during the Millennium.

Verse 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." This is not speaking of the immortal worm. The description is of those who will be outside and will be cast into the lake of fire outside of Jerusalem, cast into the Valley of Gehenna. Some seize on this and say it is talking about hell and there are worms there that never die. That's not the focus of it.

Outside of Jerusalem there was a valley called the Valley of Hinnon (or Gehenna). It is the term that Jesus used in the New Testament to refer to the place of punishment for the wicked (Mark 9:43-46). It was an area where trash, refuse, bodies of dead animals and even of certain terrible criminals were thrown. They were thrown down there, and there was a fire that was always kept burning because things were added to it. It wasn't quenched; it wasn't put out. It continued to burn and the worm didn't die. This worm refers to maggots. It just simply refers to the fact that there were always dead carcasses there for them to eat on. Maggots turn into flies and then they fly away. They lay eggs and those eggs become more maggots. There is a continual diet there to feed these maggots. That's what it is describing. It's not a description of the immortality of worms.

You will ultimately either be a part of God's Kingdom and share life with Him, or simply be destroyed with those who rebel and pursue wickedness. That is the reference here.

At this point, we have pretty well concluded the book of Isaiah. There is a lot packed into Isaiah. I think we will see when we get into Jeremiah that there is certainly a lot packed into Jeremiah. These things written down in the Prophets are descriptive of attitudes and circumstances of our time today. There's a tremendous amount of insight into God's mind, nature and character, as well as insight into events through which we will live in the years ahead of us. We will cover Jeremiah in three sections and Ezekiel in three sections.