



ISAIAH 56

JOY FOR THE OUTCASTS ~ CORRUPT LEADERS

Chapter 56 begins the final section of the book of Isaiah. While chapters 40-55 survey the Babylonian exile and speak of redemption largely in terms of a Jewish homecoming, chapters 56-66 focus on the homeland, which is seen partly as a place of corruption (Isa. 56:9 – 59:15a) and devastation (Isa. 63:7 – 64:12), but also as a place of restoration and beauty when touched by the Lord’s hand (Isa. 60-62). The final chapters (65–66), like the prelude (56:1–8), show God’s welcome of the outsider and the heathen to his holy mountain and eternal kingdom, but press home the peril of an everlasting exclusion from these glories.

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 56:1 Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed. ² Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”</p> <p>³ Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” ⁴ For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ⁵ I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.</p>	<p>a 56:1 Or “cultivate righteousness.”</p> <p>b 56:2 For believers today, our Sabbath is now a man, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have entered into the seventh day from Adam (2 Peter 3:8) and rest in the finished work of the cross. We cease from our own labors and enter into his Sabbath rest. See Heb. 4.</p> <p>c 56:3 This is a figure of speech, comparing being unable to procreate to being like a withered tree. Eunuchs were forbidden to worship with God’s people (Deut. 23:1), but God’s mercy triumphs over rejection.</p> <p>d 56:5 Or “in my house and within my walls.” This becomes a figure of speech for God’s household or family, not a literal plaque in the temple. God is saying that grace is greater than our disqualifications. In spite of our imperfections, if we continue to honor God and his Word, favor will rest on our lives forever. This favor and name will endure longer than what comes from having children.</p> <p>e 56:5 Or “monument (memorial).”</p> <p>f 56:5 Or “with an everlasting name.”</p>	<p>Joy for the Outcasts</p> <p>Isaiah 55:1 Yahweh says to his people: “Promote the cause of justice! Do what is just and right, a for soon my salvation will come and my righteousness will be unveiled. ² Blessed is the one who will faithfully keep his commitment. Yes, blessed is the one who honors the Sabbath b and does not disregard it, and the one who keeps their hands from doing evil.”</p> <p>³ The foreigner who joins himself to Yahweh should never say, “Because I’m a foreigner, Yahweh will exclude me from his people.” And the eunuchs should never say, “Because I can’t have children, I’m just a barren tree.” c ⁴ For Yahweh says to such a man, “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that honor me, and remain true to my covenant, I make this promise: ⁵ 1 I will bestow upon them within my household d both an honored place e and an honored name, even better than the honor that comes from having children. “I bestow upon them my everlasting favor; f you will never be forgotten.</p>

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Translation (TPT)	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>⁶ “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” ⁸ The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”</p> <p>⁹ All you beasts of the field, come to devour—all you beasts in the forest. ¹⁰ His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. ¹¹ The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. ¹² “Come,” they say, “let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.”</p>	<p>g 56:7 Yahweh’s holy mountain is the Zion-realm. See Heb. 12:22–24.</p> <p>h 56:7 God’s desire has always been to gather his people into the house of prayer. See Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46.</p> <p>i 56:8 Or “to those who are already gathered.” See John 17:20–24.</p> <p>j 56:12 The Septuagint omits this verse.</p>	<p>⁶ And to the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh to worship him, those who want to be his servants and love the name of Yahweh—all who honor the Sabbath and do not disregard it, and who remain true to my covenant—I make this promise: ⁷ I will welcome you into my holy mountain g and make you joyful in my house of prayer. h I will accept every sacrifice and offering that you place on my altar, for my house of worship will be known as a house of prayer for all people.” ⁸ The Lord God Almighty, who brings home the outcasts of Israel, says, “There are many others I will gather, and I will add them to those who are already gathered.” i</p> <p>Corrupt Leaders</p> <p>⁹ All you wild beasts, come and devour, you wild animals of the forest. ¹⁰ Blind watchmen, all of them! They have no revelation knowledge; they’re like dumb dogs that don’t even bark—dreaming, sleeping, devoted to slumber. ¹¹ They’re greedy dogs that never eat enough. And the shepherds have no discernment; they follow their own desires. Every last one of them seeks his own profit. ¹² Each one says, “Let’s get wine and liquor and have a party! And tomorrow, more of the same, except even better!” j</p>

Bible Knowledge Commentary

JOHN A. MARTIN

- GENTILES INCLUDED IN ISRAEL’S BLESSINGS (56:1-8)

- **A command to be righteous.**

- **56:1-2.** People are urged to do what is right (cf. 1:17) because God’s salvation (spiritual deliverance and physical protection) will come soon. Again Isaiah linked present behavior with future salvation and blessings. Because the Lord will bring salvation to those who believe, they should act justly in the present. In Isaiah’s day a righteous person (a believer who does what is right, (56:1) lived according to God’s Law, an expression of His righteous standards. Keeping the Sabbath was important under the Law (Ex. 20:8-11), for a person by not engaging in agricultural or business pursuits on that day thereby acknowledged that he believed God would take care of him and bless him. Since the Sabbath was a sign of Israel’s covenant with God, keeping the Sabbath signified that a person believed in the covenant and the Lord. Such a person also turned from doing ... evil (cf. Isa. 55:7).

- **A Promise That Believing Foreigners Will Be Blessed** (56:3-8).
 - **56:3-5.** Gentiles, people outside the covenant community, who followed the LORD were not to think they would have no salvation or part in the millennial kingdom. Even foreigners (cf. 14:1) and eunuchs who join themselves to the Lord are welcome. This contrasts with the exclusion of eunuchs under the Mosaic Law (Deut. 23:1). Keeping the Sabbaths and obeying God's covenant stipulations (cf. Isa. 56:6) would demonstrate their loyalty to the LORD (cf. vv. 1-2). In fact they will be memorialized forever (v. 5). This is striking because a eunuch, unable to sire children, has no way of passing on his name through sons.
 - **56:6-8.** Foreigners who love the LORD are acceptable to God and will be regathered along with believing Israelites. Redeemed Gentiles, though not in the covenantal family of Israel, can still receive God's blessings. They show their devotion to the LORD by their service, worship, and obedience (keeping the Sabbath and God's covenant stipulations; cf. v. 4). As God promised Abraham, through him all peoples of the world will be blessed (Gen. 12:3). These Gentiles will be gathered to Zion (His holy mountain; see comments on Isa. 11:9) along with Israel, where they too will worship the Lord in prayer and offerings.
- **Condemnation of the wicked** (56:9-57:21)
 - Throughout most of this second nine-chapter division of Isaiah (chaps. 49-57) the emphasis has been on the future glorious state of the redeemed remnant in the kingdom to be established by the Messiah. Now in 56:9-57:21, which concludes these nine chapters, Isaiah reflected on the spiritual situation in his day. In view of their glorious future, one would suppose that his people would want to obey the Lord in anticipation of that kingdom. But this was not true in Isaiah's time.
- **The Call to Gentiles to Destroy Israel.**
 - **56:9-12.** The Lord called for the beasts (Gentile powers, probably Babylon) to devour (punish) Israel because she was spiritually insensitive. The watchmen (cf. Jer. 6:17; Ezek. 33:7), priests and religious leaders were blind and ignorant and were like dogs who like to sleep and eat. Good shepherds know the best grazing ground for their flocks. But these leaders were ignorant (cf. Isa. 56:10) shepherds going their own way like their sheep! (cf. 53:6) They were more interested in their own gain than in their people's welfare. Concerned only with their own pleasure, they failed to consider that judgment will come (56:12).

TONIGHT'S DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. This last section of Isaiah is all about "homecoming." Obviously, this can be interpreted on a couple different "levels." How does the nation of Israel coming home out of captivity in Babylon compare to the homecoming of the saints at the end of the age?
2. Does it shock you that Yahweh seems to open the door to relationship with the heathen? Does this seem unfair to you? How does this relate to the homecoming of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32?
3. Have you ever "left" your relationship with God? Why is it you think some people walk away from relationship with the church, yet says that they never left God, just the church? We've all know people who grew up in church, left for a period of time and then returned. Why do you think they return? What might be keeping them from "coming how to Jesus?" How can we encourage their homecoming?