



ISAIAH 66

GOD’S RESTING PLACE IS WITH THE HUMBLE ~ GOD INTERVENES ~ JUDGMENT BY FIRE AND SWORD ~ GOD’S REIGN

“Men can look forward to the future with fear and with hope. God, the Creator, extends the offer of fellowship to the humble who are responsive to His Word (66:1–6). Zion is told to rejoice, confident that all her troubles are but birth pangs, and soon she will give birth to a glorious future (vv. 7–11). God will bless His land with peace and comfort His children in the day He executes judgment on sin (vv. 12–16). This book of powerful poetry ends in prose. God pledges that all mankind as well as the Jewish people will find Him at history’s end. The new heavens and the new earth He makes will endure. But the bodies of those who rebelled against the Lord will be scattered over old earth’s deadened lands (vv. 17–24).” ~ Lawrence O. Richards, The Bible Readers Companion

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 66:1 Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? ² All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. ³ “He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig’s blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; ⁴ I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.”</p>	<p>a 66:1 The glorious God is too great to be limited to a literal chair-like throne. This throne is symbolic, a term meant to help us understand his great sovereignty and authority as ruler over all.</p> <p>b 66:1 God rebukes the returning exiles for wanting to rebuild the temple and to restore the outward forms of worship with no intention of turning from their evil ways and having their hearts changed. God no longer dwells in man-made buildings but in God-shaped hearts of people who love, worship, and believe in him. See v. 2; 1 Kings 8:22–43; Acts 7:48; Eph. 2:19–22; Heb. 3:5–6.</p> <p>c 66:2 Or “the one bruised (crushed) in spirit.”</p> <p>d 66:3 Or “blesses.”</p> <p>e 66:4 Or “mock.”</p>	<p>God’s Resting Place Is with the Humble</p> <p>Isaiah 66:1 This is what Yahweh says: “The heavens are my throne a and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? b Where is the place where I will rest? ² My hand made these things so they all belong to me,” declares Yahweh. “But there is one my eyes are drawn to: the humble one, the tender one, c the trembling one who lives in awe of all I say. ³ But the one who offers a bull with no humility is like one who kills a man. The one who offers a lamb without contrition is like one who breaks a dog’s neck. The one who brings grain offerings with no heart-purity is like one who offers pig’s blood! The one who offers incense with no sincerity is like one who kisses d an idol! They have all chosen their own way, not mine, and they take delight in these disgusting things! ⁴ So I chose to punish e them and to bring on them what they fear the most because I called out to them and they ignored me. I spoke and they did not listen but did what is evil in my sight and chose what I despise.</p>

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<p>⁵ Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: “Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name’s sake have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy’; but it is they who shall be put to shame. ⁶ “The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!</p> <p>⁷ “Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. ⁸ Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children. ⁹ Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?” says the LORD; “shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?” says your God.</p> <p>¹⁰ “Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; ¹¹ that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance.”</p> <p>¹² For thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. ¹³ As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.</p> <p>¹⁵ “For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶ For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.</p> <p>¹⁷ “Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig’s flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the LORD.</p>	<p>f 66:6 Or “voice.” Ch. 40 begins with a thunderous voice in the wilderness; Isaiah ends with a voice like thunder in his temple.</p> <p>g 66:8 This actually happened with Israel being “reborn” as a nation in 1948. And it happened at Pentecost when the church, a holy nation, was birthed by the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2:1–4.</p> <p>h 66:14 Or “Your bones (a metaphor for your inner being) will sprout like grass (flourish).” Some commentators view this as physical health and well-being.</p> <p>i 66:14 Or “hand,” a metaphor for his power and anointing.</p> <p>j 66:15 See 2 Kings 2:1–18; Ezek. 1:4–28.</p> <p>k 66:15 See Zech. 9:14; Heb. 12:29.</p> <p>l 66:16 See Jer. 23:29–32.</p> <p>m 66:16 See Heb. 4:12.</p> <p>n 66:16 Or “contend” or “plead.” See Amos 7:4–6.”</p>	<p>⁵ Hear the words of Yahweh, you who tremble at what he says: “Shame on your own people, who reject you and hate you, claiming they do it for my sake. For they mock you, saying, ‘May Yahweh be glorified; let us see you rejoice.’”</p> <p>God Intervenes</p> <p>⁶ Listen! A sound of uproar is coming from the city a sound from the temple! It is the thunder f of Yahweh as he completely punishes his enemies! ⁷ Zion gave birth suddenly, even before going into labor. She delivered a son without any painful contractions. ⁸ Who has ever seen or heard of such a wonder? Could a country be born in a day? Can a nation be birthed so suddenly? g Yet no sooner does Zion go into labor than she gives birth to sons! ⁹ Yahweh, your God, says, “Do I allow you to conceive and not to give birth? Do I shut the womb when I’m the one who delivers?”</p> <p>¹⁰ So rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her! All who love her, join in with her great joy, especially those who remember her grief!</p> <p>¹¹ You, her children, will drink the milk of her prosperity and nurse with delight from her glorious abundance!</p> <p>¹² For Yahweh says: “I will extend to her prosperity like a river and the wealth of gentiles like a flooding river. You will nurse from her breast, be cradled in her arms, and delightfully bounced on her knees. ¹³ As a mother tenderly comforts her child, so will I tenderly comfort you, and you will find comfort in Jerusalem.”</p> <p>Judgment by Fire and Sword</p> <p>¹⁴ When you feast your eyes on this, your heart will leap for joy and be revived; your body will flourish and sprout like grass. h The mighty power i of Yahweh will be revealed, resting on his servants, but his fury will be shown to his enemies! ¹⁵ Look! Yahweh is coming as a raging fire and his chariots like a whirlwind j to unleash his anger with fiery fury and with the fiery lightning of his rebuke! k ¹⁶ For with fire l and with his sword m Yahweh will judge n humanity—many will be the slain of Yahweh! “</p> <p>¹⁷ “The end is near for those who ‘consecrate’ and ‘purify’ themselves to enter their cultic groves! They go in procession one after another into their ceremonies. They eat disgusting foods—pork, mice, and rodents. ¹⁸ I despise their evil works o and their thoughts,” p says Yahweh.</p>

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<p>¹⁸ “For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, ¹⁹ and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. ²⁰ And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. ²¹ And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.</p> <p>²² “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. ²³ From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD. ²⁴ “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”</p>	<p>o 66:18 See Gal. 5:19–21.</p> <p>p 66:18 Or “imagination.” The works and thoughts of fallen humanity can be compared to the “mark (character) of the beast” on the hands (works) and the foreheads (thoughts, mind-sets) of people. See Acts 17:29; Rev. 13:13–18.</p> <p>q 66:18 Or “nations and tongues.” See Acts 2:5–12.</p> <p>r 66:19 To “set a sign” is likely a figure of speech for “to display a mighty miracle.” This Hebrew phrase is also found in Ps. 78:43 and Jer. 32:20. In the book of Acts, the miracle sign God set among his people was the Holy Spirit, who sent out laborers into the harvest fields of the nations.</p> <p>s 66:19 Or “Pul.” Put is modern-day Libya.</p> <p>t 66:19 Lud is Lydia in modern-day western Turkey.</p> <p>u 66:19 Or possibly Meshech, a region frequently associated with Tubal, which could be a reference to Russia (Moscow).</p> <p>v 66:19 Ancient Tubal is comprised of much of modern-day Turkey.</p> <p>w 66:19 Javan was the son of Japheth and the grandson of Noah. This is a likely metonymy referring to modern-day Greece.</p> <p>x 66:22 Or “seed.”</p> <p>y 66:24 This is likely a figure of speech for unending suffering. Some equate the worm with the guilty conscience. See Mark 9:48.</p> <p>z 66:24 It is possible that this refers to a mass burial site where maggots continue to eat flesh and fire burns continually with corpses. Some see this as having been fulfilled by the slaughter of the enemies during the time of the Maccabees, others as a view toward a future slaughter, and still others as a description of hell.</p> <p>aa 66:24 Or “all flesh,” the last words of Isaiah. It is a long-held Jewish tradition that Isaiah was placed inside a hollow tree and sawn in two, by the order of King Manasseh. The book of Isaiah is likewise “sawn in two” by theologians with theories of two or more authors.</p>	<p>God’s Reign</p> <p>“The time is coming for me to gather people together from all over the world, q and they will come and gaze on my radiance. ¹⁹ I will set an amazing sign r among them. I will send some of the remnant to other nations—to Tarshish, Put, s Lud t (known for its archers), u Tubal, v Javan, w and distant islands that have never heard of my fame nor gazed on my glory. They will declare my glory among the gentiles! ²⁰ And they will bring back from the nations your own people as an offering to me,” says Yahweh. “They will come on horseback, in chariots, in wagons, on mules and camels to my holy mountain, Jerusalem,” says Yahweh. “In the same way my people bring a grain offering in a sacred vessel to the temple, they will be brought as grain offerings to my holy mountain, Jerusalem, as a holy offering to me. ²¹ And some of them I will appoint as Levitical priests,” says Yahweh.</p> <p>²² This is what Yahweh declares: “The new heavens and the new earth that I am making will remain and endure before me in the same way your offspring x and your name will “endure. ²³ From one Sabbath to the next, one month to the next, one year to the next, all humanity will come to worship me! ²⁴ “They will go out of the city and see the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me. For their worm will not die y and their fire will never go out. z And they will be abhorrent to humanity.” aa</p>

Bible Knowledge Commentary

JOHN A. MARTIN

- **THE LORD'S FULFILLMENT OF HIS PROMISES** (CHAP. 66) As the climax to the book, this chapter fittingly describes the Millennium, the time toward which history has been looking, which was promised to Abraham.
 - **The Lord to esteem the humble** (66:1-2)
 - **66:1-2.** God is pictured figuratively as sitting on a throne (cf. 6:1) with the earth as His footstool (cf. Acts 7:49). Because of His majesty no one can build a house for Him to dwell in (1 Kings 8:27); He is the Creator. Yet what He values above His inanimate Creation are people who are humble and contrite (cf. Isa. 57:15) and who follow His word. In one way or another, this has been Isaiah's message throughout this book. **God wants His people to follow the truth He has revealed to them.** For Israel that was primarily the Mosaic Covenant. Pointing the people back to the Word of God, Isaiah was indicating that they needed to obey it if they were to enjoy His blessings.
 - **The Lord to judge** (66:3-6)
 - **66:3-6.** The strange comparisons in verse 3 indicate that the people's religious sacrifices and offerings were only external ritual. In their hearts the people were murderers, perverters of God's dietary laws (cf. 65:4; Lev. 11:7), and idolaters. In reality they were going their own ways (cf. Isa. 53:6) rather than the Lord's way. Therefore harsh judgment would come. (The last four lines of 66:4 are almost identical with 65:12; see comments there.) People in Israel who professed to know the LORD but who actually hated and discriminated against God's people would be shamed by His discipline when the temple would be destroyed by the Babylonians.
 - **The Lord to give birth to His nation** (66:7-21)
 - **66:7-11.** Israel's return to the land will be so remarkably quick that it will be like a woman giving birth to a son before (v. 7) or as soon as (v. 8) she has any labor ... pains! God does not start something and leave it unfinished. As surely as a woman's womb opens, not closes, for delivery, so God will do for Jerusalem what He has set out to do. This then is cause for rejoicing. The people of Israel will delight in Jerusalem as an infant delights in her mother's sustenance.
 - **66:12-13.** As stated many times in the Book of Isaiah, peace will come to Jerusalem (cf., e.g., 48:18; 55:12) and the nations' wealth will flow to her (cf. 60:5, 11; 61:6). In 66:11-12 Jerusalem is compared to a mother; in verse 13, God is compared to a mother who comforts her child.
 - **66:14-18.** When God restores His people to Jerusalem (vv. 10-13) in the Millennium, they will rejoice and prosper, but on His and her enemies He will swoop down in judgment like a fire (cf. 2 Thes. 1:7-9) and a whirlwind to slay them. This judgment will be fair because of their abominations: worshiping in idolatrous gardens (cf. Isa. 1:29; 65:3) and eating ceremonially unclean animals such as pigs (cf. 65:4; 66:3; Lev. 11:7) and rats (cf. Lev. 11:29). When the Messiah returns, His judgment will be on all nations (cf. Zech. 14:3; Rev. 19:17-18) and because of that judgment the world will see His glory.
 - **66:19-21.** People outside Israel will turn to Him and worship Him. The remnant of believing Israelites will travel as missionaries to other parts of the world, to tell Gentiles about God's glory. Those places and peoples will include Tarshish, probably in southwestern Spain (cf. 23:1, 6, 10, 14; 60:9), Libyans in northern Africa, Lydians in western Asia Minor, Tubal in northeastern Asia Minor, Greece, and distant islands. These and other peoples will be converted and will travel to Jerusalem to worship in the temple (cf. 2:2; Zech. 8:23). Some of them will even be selected as priests and Levites, thus showing that all the nations will in fact be blessed through Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3).

- **The Lord to establish new heavens and new earth** (66:22-24)

- **66:22-24.** Israel will be as enduring as the new heavens and the new earth (see comments on 65:17). All mankind (i.e., people from all nations) will worship the LORD, bowing down before Him. As Isaiah had frequently written, these righteous ones will contrast greatly with those who rebelled against the LORD. They will suffer eternal torment (cf. Mark 9:48). This awesome way in which the majestic Book of Isaiah concludes points to the need for unrepentant people to turn to the Lord, the only God, the Holy One of Israel.

TONIGHT'S DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. From the first two verses of this chapter, it seems obvious that the Lord is not after a building, but broken and contrite hearts. What are these hearts broken and contrite over? What is it that God is calling his people to that will make their hearts whole again?
2. Verses 3 and 4 are responses of the people...in the opposite direction! It seems crazy that God's people could be so out of touch with his heart for them. Why do we so easily disconnect from God's heart when we lack humility? What is going on in our heart that moves us into such pride?
3. One of the biggest struggles we have with God's timing is when he seems to delay in responding to our requests. Verses 6-9 describe, not a slow-down, but a dramatic acceleration in God's timing. Has the Lord ever noticeably accelerated the timing of one of your requests or promises from him? How did the speeding up of his response impact your faith in him?
4. God's description of the Millennial reign of Jesus seems to include his appointing of "Levitical priests." What would the role of these priests be during the Millennium? Would you be interested in serving the Lord in this capacity? Why?
5. What was your favorite part of this study of the book of Isaiah? If you could share one thing from this study with your closest unsaved friend, what would you share?