

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

THEME:

Outward religious forms and inward wicked ways delayed the grace and glory of God.

REMARKS:

This chapter brings us to the final division of the prophecy of Isaiah—"The GLORY of the Lord which Comes Through the Suffering Servant."

The explanation is given here as to why the glory was withheld.

- The people were very supercilious and cynical about their relationship to God.
- They were observing forms and dared to question the actions of God toward them.
- They sat in judgment upon God and His methods.
- In spite of their outward observance of religion they were indulging in their own wicked way.

This same spirit is manifested after the Babylonian captivity which reveals that it did not cure them.

Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said. It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts (Malachi 3:13-14).

What brazen effrontery and audacity to question God! This is the spirit of the natural man with his outward show of religion, his heart is far from God and his way is wicked. The veneer of godliness is nauseating to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (Revelation 3:16).

OUTLINE:

1. **EXPOSURE of the Wicked Ways of Israel.** Verses 1-3
2. **EXPLANATION from God for Rejecting Their Religious Acts.** Verses 4-7

3. EXPRESSION of Concern on the Part of God for Their Welfare. Verses 8-14

COMMENT:

Verse 1—Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

The prophet is commanded to cry aloud a message that is always unpopular. To point out the transgression and sins of a people who think they are very religious is to bring down the bitter displeasure and caustic invective upon one's head. Only a very brave man will do it. The basic weakness of liberalism is its aim to please the natural man without telling him the real truth about his fatal disease. The medical profession would be guilty of criminal negligence if they followed the same procedure with the physical man.

Verse 2—Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

There is an element of biting satire in God's statement. These people were attending the temple worship regularly and going through the ordinances punctiliously. They were meticulous in following the forms of worship. They actually enjoyed going to church, yet their lives bear no resemblance to those of Christians.

Verse 3—Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

Petulantly they asked the reason for fasting and self-infliction if God did not take notice and put them on the book.

They evidently had made fasting an important part of their religion. God gave them feast days but not fast days. They were to afflict their souls in connection with the Great Day of Atonement. In times of sin they were to fast. Fasting was the outward expression of the soul. They had made it a form which ministered to their ego and pride.

Fasting was a private matter between the soul and God and not a public show. Our Lord condemned them for abusing the fast.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you. They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly (Matthew 6:16-18).

Verse 4—Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

God explains why He cannot accept their fasting. They thought it gave them special acceptance with Him.

Verse 5—Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

God had not commanded their fasting, and their acts of worship were entirely outward.

Verse 6—Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

God wanted acts to match their fasts. They were oppressing the poor and taking advantage of their brother Israelite.

Verse 7—Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

They were turning their backs to the poor and needy. They even refused to show kindness and love to their own flesh and blood. Their religion was as cold as the north side of a tombstone in January.

Verse 8—Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.

God could not manifest His blessing and glory to a people who practiced their religion so badly.

Verse 9—Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

God wanted to hear their prayers and He wanted to bless, he wanted to open the windows of heaven and pour them out a blessing but their hearts were not open to receive it.

Verse 10—And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day:

God asked them to practice one specific thing that He might bless.

Verse 11—And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

What an overture of blessing God promised if they would show reality in their religion.

Verse 12—And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Their return to God would repair the wreckage of the sin of generations past.

Verse 13—If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words

God uses another specific with them, he gave the Sabbath Day to Israel as we have indicated before (see Exodus 31:12-17).

The Sabbath was between God and the children of Israel. Even for them it was to be more than a form. They made it a day for their own pleasure. It was only a hollow form. They were to enter into the rest of body and soul on that day, how many of us have entered into the rest of redemption which this day typifies?

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it . . . For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his (Hebrews 4:1,10).

Verse 14—Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The horizon here is extended and the vista of the future opens before us. They may delay the approaching glory, but they cannot destroy God's plan for the coming manifestation of glory.

~ end of chapter 58 ~

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