

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

THEME:

God's gracious and global invitation of salvation.

REMARKS:

The work of the suffering Servant in chapter 53 makes possible the offer of salvation in this chapter. In chapter 54 the invitation was confined to Israel, here the invitation is extended to the entire world. In chapters 54 and 55 we have the results of the redemption wrought in chapter 53. The Gospel went first to Israel and then to the Gentiles.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16).

It is yet to find its complete fulfillment in Israel. Today it is worldwide and the only condition is the thirst. Although God's salvation is to be proclaimed to every creature, only the thirsty will respond. This is not a mechanical offer locked in the airtight compartment of God's election, but it rests upon the free will of each hearer, he is urged, yea, he is commanded to seek the Lord.

OUTLINE:

1. **INVITATION to the World to Accept Salvation of God.** Verses 1-5
2. **INITIATION In to Ways of God.** Verses 6-9
3. **INSTITUTION of the Word of God.** Verses 10-13

COMMENT:

Verse 1—**Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.**

The chapter and first verse open with a sharp form of address, "**Ho!**" It is the heart cry of God to everyone to pause and consider His salvation, he wants every weak soul to behold His mighty bared arm in salvation.

Though the invitation is ecumenical, it is limited to a certain class—the thirsty. Those who have drunk at the water holes of this world; having tasted the flavors of its pleasures and are still thirsty, are bidden to come and drink of the water of life. For those whose thirst has not been slaked by the man-made cisterns, the invitation is to drink deep and long of the eternal springs.

Let us listen then, as if we had never heard the melody of this tender and gracious invitation before. Who are the guests here invited? All who thirst! All that is needed to be welcome then, is—not to need (for that is true of all)—but to want what is offered. Am I utterly dissatisfied with myself? I thirst! Am I dissatisfied with all the world can offer me, and of which I have tasted? I thirst! Is my spirit altogether dissatisfied with all the formalism of religion; then do I thirst! Blessed thirst! It is the only prerequisite to enjoyment—Dr. F. C. Jennings.

It is a threefold invitation expressed by the three times repeated “**come.**”

Three types of drink are offered:

(1) “**Waters**” The dual form is used, as this water is too wonderful to be expressed by the singular form. “**Waters**” also speaks of quantity as well as quality. Water is essential to life and it speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit, as regenerator and life giver. Water must be received first, as it is life.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink, he that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified) (John 7:37-39).

The invitation of the Lord Jesus was to men to come to Him and drink. The life-giving waters were the Holy Spirit, as He clearly stated.

(2) “**Wine**” is the second type of drink offered. This speaks of the drink of the soul, which is joy. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts (Proverbs 31:6).

Joy follows the reception of life; it never precedes it.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost (I Thessalonians 1:6).

(3) “**Milk**” is the third type of drink offered. Milk is essential for growth and development, especially for babes.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (I Peter 2:2).

The Word of God is the only formula God has for newborn babes.

The sad state of so many professing Christians is explained in their neglect of the Word of God. If believers could only realize the importance of the Word of God to their spiritual growth and development, the midweek Bible study would become especially significant and of primary importance.

These three drinks are not listed on God's menu at some exorbitant price though they are priceless. Money is not the requirement, for they are not for sale at a monetary value. The only requirement is thirst. Those who are utterly disappointed in themselves and despise their own petty lives are bidden to come. They are thirsty. Those who are "fed up" on the monotonous pleasure of this world are thirsty and they may come. Those who are dissatisfied with the religious ritual of men are thirsty. All are invited to come. Are you thirsty?

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:13-14).

Verse 2—Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?"

The pleasures of this world are expensive (An infamous night club in Southern California advertised that it would charge \$25 per person for New Year's Eve). You have to pay for the pleasures of this world, not only is it expensive, it never satisfies. It is counterfeit. It is "ersatz bread." It is sawdust. It cannot satisfy the soul.

Then Where is Happiness?

Not in pleasure.—Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure, if anyone did, he wrote: "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Not in money—Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable devil on earth."

There is a bread that satisfies.

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6:35). "Let your soul delight itself in fatness."

This is a fatness that does not make fat. Rather, it makes the soul fat and leaves the body lean. Most of us Christians are overweight physically and underweight spiritually. God wants it vice versa.

Verse 3—**Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.**

“**Incline your ear**” is God’s urgent request to pay particular attention to His gracious offer, he is again repeating, “**Come now, and let us reason together.**” Shut out the luring voices that would detract us.

The “**everlasting covenant**” of David is the one found in II Samuel 7. This is yet to be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. “**The sure mercies of David**” are for us today.

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David (Acts 13:32-34).

These mercies have been made sure to us because our sins have been put away on the cross of Christ. God’s holiness is vindicated and now we have “**forgiveness of sins.**”

Verse 4—**Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.**

Jesus is called the True Witness, he witnessed a good confession, he is yet to become the Great Commander.

Verse 5—**Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.**

The invitation to participate in the sure mercies of David knows no national or racial boundaries but girdles the globe.

Verse 6—**Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:**

The way of God and the way of man are put in contrast and conflict. The objection is often made that this is not a legitimate gospel call for today, as man is not asked to seek God, but on the contrary, God is seeking man. This certainly is accurate, but nonetheless this call is for today, as the human aspect is in view here, human responsibility is not defeated by the sovereign purposes and election of God (John 10:26-27), his sheep do hear His voice and follow Him.

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him (John 17:2).

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out (John 6:37).

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:45).

Verse 7—**Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Man's way is a wicked way and leads to death.**

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12).

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

Verse 8—**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.**

God's way is different from man's way. The Gospel is God's way, and no man could ever have devised it.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).

Proud man would never have chosen this way. Man by wisdom could not have figured it out.

Verse 9—**For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

The Gospel could only come by revelation, as man's reason never follows the redemption route.

Verse 10—**For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:**

In this closing section, prominence is given to the Word of God, the only place where the Gospel is found. Salvation is a revelation of God. The Word of God is likened to the rain that comes down from heaven. Man does not work his way up to God by some Tower of Babel effort, but he receives God's revelation which comes down from heaven. The rain causes the earth to become fruitful. The seeds germinate and fructify and bring forth abundantly.

Verse 11—**So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**

God's Word is rain and seed.

It falls upon the dry and desert souls of men. It will germinate in the hearts of many. It will accomplish God's purpose. See the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-23).

Verse 12—For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

The rain causes the earth to respond with a green blanket of praise to God. Some day the earth will respond with a note of praise to the Creator and Redeemer.

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now (Romans 8:21-22).

Verse 13—Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

This looks forward to the Millennium when the earth will be redeemed. The curse of sin is expressed by the thorn and brier.

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field (Genesis 3:18).

(This chapter was prepared while we were on the train going from Los Angeles to Chicago. Across the desert of Arizona and New Mexico a blanket of snow had fallen covering the desert with a cold but beautiful mantle of white. It had fallen the night before, silently from the heavens. As the desert sun comes, the snow is melted, giving fresh water to the parched desert. In a few weeks the desert will respond with a sea of lovely desert green and flowers. This is a parable in action of a future day that is coming and is likewise a parable for today of how God's Word works).

~ end of chapter 55 ~

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