

The previous passage introduced this final section of Isaiah by declaring that the LORD would show his indignation against His enemies (Isaiah 66:14). 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.* Isaiah 66:15 Fire is the tool of purification (Numbers 31:23). When Hebrew stone vessels were defiled, they could be cleansed by putting them through the fire. We recognize today that this is actually a way of destroying germs and bacteria. When we leave this earth the testing of our works is compared to a fire consuming the temporal things we did while at the same time revealing the lasting work of God in and through us (1 Corinthians 3:15). God is compared to a consuming fire in Isaiah 33:14 and to a refiner's fire in Malachi 3:1-2. In the literal or figurative sense, the idea is one of purging what is temporary and worthless so that that which is of God, of true value, will remain.

While God desires that all come to repentance, He is angry with the wickedness of man. That is because it is evil, destructive, misleading, and harmful to mankind. It is contrary to the perfect nature of God. He has held back His justice upon evil, waiting for every last soul who will repent and come into the light (John 3:19-21). But as man's sin adds every day to the horrible mountain of evil that causes pain and suffering to mankind, God's passion for justice to be executed grows until that day His chariots will burst forth like a whirlwind to render his anger in fury and his rebuke with flames of fire (2 Kings 6:17). God is eager to rid the world of all that corrupts His creation.

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.* Isaiah 66:16 This sounds like the final purging of the earth at the end of the millennium. The Babylonian attacks on Jerusalem were a foreshadowing, as is Armageddon at the end of the tribulation. Revelation 19:15 tells us that at the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will destroy those who have gathered against Him with the sword that comes from His mouth. But at the end of the millennium, when the world again comes against Jesus and the city of God to try to defeat Him, fire comes down out heaven devours them (Revelation 20:9). This is also the point at which the new heaven and earth appear (Revelation 21:1). This final portion of Isaiah seems to refer to both, almost as if Isaiah sees them together, but then that is how the prophets saw the first and second coming of Jesus.

This verse mentions both the sword and the fire God uses for judgment. While it may ultimately speak of the final judgement, we can see in it the intermediate foreshadowing events that are precursors to the final one. The next verse shows us this was meant to wake up the people of that day to the coming judgment by Babylon, but of course these same people will be at the final judgment as well. The theme of the

very first chapter of Isaiah was God's coming judgment upon Judah that was compared to a fire (Isaiah 1:31). The book closes on the same theme as Judah did not receive the warning of God that came through Isaiah's many years as a prophet.

Before we leave this theme of final judgment, we should pause to consider the application to ourselves. God was trying to wake up Judah to the immediate *and* eternal consequences of rebellion against Him. All through Isaiah we have seen that our nation stands at the very same threshold. While it took a hundred years to come to pass in Judah, we can't say for certain for certain how close it is to us today. We can say the nation has turned its back on God.

We look to man instead of to God. We look to our military might. Imagine how far a candidate for President would get if his every answer to every policy question was to repent and turn to the LORD. He'd be labeled as a nut job. But that is the only solution to our many problems. It has been the answer throughout our history. Read Peter Marshall's books, *The Light and the Glory* or *From Sea to Shining Sea*. But we refuse to learn from our history. Turning to God is the solution to single parent homes, to the decline of morality, to race relations, to the radical Muslim threat, to our economic insolvency, and every other problem we face. **God has never failed us, but we have written Him out of our history.**

As individuals we need to see God is the solution to our own problems as well. What is the priority of your life? Will your life's labor be consumed by the fire when you pass from this earth? Will Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant (Mathew 25:21)," or will He ask us why we wasted our life on vanity?

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. Isaiah 66:17 This verse is God's verdict on the idolaters of Judah. They would go to God's temple and go through the rituals prescribed by Moses and then go to gardens on hilltops and worship foreign gods in ways that were an abomination to God (Leviticus 11:7). God is declaring that He will not put up with it forever. Hypocrisy will only be allowed to continue for so long. When you see people who call themselves Christians and yet play with fortune tellers and New Age concepts, who live solely for worldly pleasure, you can be certain that there is an end (Matthew 15:7-8). God declared they would come to an end together. That would happen when Babylon invaded, and will happen again at the last judgment.

The following verses appear to me to be speaking of the end of the tribulation and beginning of the millennial reign. *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, Isaiah 66:18 The believers who survive the tribulation will be gathered before the Lord and they will see His glory. Because there are some who have survived, this must speak of early in the Millennium. We see this in Revelation 7:9-10 ⁹ *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,* ¹⁰ *and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

The passage also has elements of the final judgment is described in detail in Revelation 20:11-15 ¹¹ *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.* ¹² *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.* ¹³ *And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.* ¹⁴ *Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.* ¹⁵ *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Jesus described it in Matthew 25:31-32 ³¹ *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.* ³² *Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.* You can see the combination of seeing the glory of God and God knowing each person's deeds and thoughts in that final judgment.

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.* Isaiah 66:19 God will set a sign among them. Several places in Isaiah speak of a sign. The virgin birth was a sign (Isaiah 7:14). Jesus' life was a sign (Isaiah 11:10). The recovery of Israel to a verdant land was a sign (Isaiah 55:13). Miraculous gifts are called signs in Mark 16:17. Perhaps the last one is the sign of these the Lord will choose to send as missionaries to the ends of the earth. This happened in an intermediate sense with the people who saw Jesus and His resurrection. God chose some to see His glory and resurrection and to be witnesses, sending them to the nations (Acts 1:8). The nations mentioned were the farthest ones the Jews knew of at the time Isaiah wrote. The term "coastlands" we have seen before means the ends of the earth. These missionaries will declare the glory of Jesus to the world during the millennium.

At the beginning of the millennium, all surviving believers are gathered to see Jesus and will come to worship Him. There will still need to be those who explain to the world what the Lord has done for us. They will have some kind of sign, perhaps the same as that of the Apostles. The sign shows they are truly representatives of the Lord.

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. Isaiah 66:20 Jew and Gentile become brothers through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:14). Everyone who comes to faith in Jesus is an offering to the Lord, a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). In the Millennium, each new convert will be brought to Jerusalem. The grain offerings were a shadow of this reality, just as the firstfruits of distant fields were brought to the Lord. In Christ our bodies are sanctified vessels. The offering they contain is our hearts.

²¹ And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD. Isaiah 66:21 While every believer is priest in the sense (1 Peter 2:5) that they can come into the Lord's presence in prayer at any time (Hebrews 4:16), it sounds to me like the Lord is going to choose some of these Gentile converts to stay in Jerusalem to minister to the Lord in the third Jewish temple.

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. Isaiah 66:22 The children of these converts apparently will not take place in the rebellion at the end of the millennium, but will also be born again. They will become a part of the household of God, the New Jerusalem, the heavenly temple. The new heaven and new earth seen in Revelation 21:1 are created after the final rebellion at the end of the millennium. It is only then that the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven from God.

²³ From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD. Isaiah 66:23 The new moons and Sabbaths were special days of worship to the Jewish people, and they will be again in the millennium. Zechariah even speaks of celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16). Of course then the meaning behind these days of worship will be seen as fulfilled in Jesus.

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." Isaiah 66:24 Those in that day can go out and look on the valley of Armageddon and see the carnage of those who rebelled against Jesus. It will be a reminder of their eternal state in hell (Revelation 21:8). Jesus quoted a portion

of this passage when He described hell (Mark 9:48). Yet, at the end of the thousand year reign, those who have not turned to Jesus will rebel again.

The heart of man is incredibly corrupt. That any of us should be saved is the miracle of God's grace. That grace is available to all who will come to Him by faith. He pleads for us to come. He has done all the work. He paid our debt. All we need to do is receive the free gift He offers us. It will transform our life, but not because He demands we give up pleasure, but rather, He offers us a greater and richer joy than we could ever find in this passing world.

In Isaiah's prophecies to Judah, we have seen the problem with our own hearts and our nation. The refusal to listen to God's warnings was the main indictment. Though they knew what God required of them and the blessings of God when they obeyed, they kept going after foreign gods, thinking there was something to be gained by experimenting with them.

We saw the real solution to the problem of the heart of man and our sinfulness is the Son that would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). We saw that the Son God would give us is our Prince of Peace, the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6). He is also our suffering servant. In four songs written of this One to come we saw that He would be rejected by His own people and yet become a light to the world (Isaiah 49:6). He would bear our iniquities and become our sin offering (Isaiah 53:6).

In our final chapters we saw how God will conclude it all with a final chance for the world to recognize His love and mercy. The millennial reign will rid everyone of any doubt, so that those who oppose Him in the end will be without excuse.

We also saw the glorious future for those who are His throughout eternity. Joy and gladness will be ours forever (Isaiah 65:18-19). Past sorrows and pain will be forgotten. We will enjoy eternal fellowship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God has laid the choice before us. History illustrates the two paths over and over again, but the choice is ours to make. Choose this day whom you will serve.

Questions

- 1 Why does God come with pent up fury?
- 2 What is significant about fire?
- 3 How could this address multiple events?
- 4 Apply the warning of verse 1 and 2.
- 5 Where should we turn in times of trouble?
- 6 What two times are all men brought before Jesus?
- 7 Who is sent to the nations?
- 8 Why do some Old Testament rituals remain?
- 9 What warning remains through the millennium?
- 10 Review the main themes of Isaiah.