

July 18

Isaiah 54-56

Welcome back to the July 18th edition of project 4:4. I'm Terry Ebers, the high school director here at CCC and I'm excited to bring you our daily accelerator. Today we read Isaiah chapters 54-56 and we encountered some rich passages of scripture, some of which are maybe familiar to you. So, let's go ahead and dive in...

In chapter 54 and 55, Isaiah the prophet peers into the future. He now is looking past the suffering of the exile...and on to the time of the re-gathering of the people of Judah. And in chapter 56 something even more wonderful is in view as Isaiah sees a day when the salvation that came through Abraham to Israel is actually freely offered to all the nations of the world. Now that would have been a new thought for many godly Jews of Isaiah's day. And it was still a new thought to many godly Jews of Paul's day. But it is completely consistent with everything that God ever said He was going to do from the time of Abraham onward -- "through you," He told Abram, "All the nations of the earth will be blessed." You are blessed to be a blessing. The Great Commission that Jesus gave to His disciples in Mark 16 was to go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Another thing you may have noticed in chapter 54 is the description of the rebuilt Jerusalem. It is figurative language meant to remind Israel of how valuable they were in God's eyes. Starting in verse 11 it says..."O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones." Interestingly, this is very similar to a description in Revelation 21 of the New Jerusalem that God will make to house His redeemed people for eternity. John, who wrote revelation, had his mind steeped in the Old Testament scriptures and when he saw the vision of what God was going to do it was to the image of scripture already stored in his mind that he turned for the words to describe what he saw. In other words John and the other New Testament writers had their minds and hearts so full of the Word of God that it formed the "grid" through which everything they saw and experienced was interpreted. I want to be that kind of person. I want my heart and mind (and yours) to be so full of God's word that it colors everything I see and know. I want to have a Biblical worldview in which everything I see in the world is seen through the lens of scripture. After 58 weeks of Bible study I know that it is starting to happen for you. I hope & trust that as you've been consistent in reading God's Word, you've begun to see the world through a new lens.

Well let's move on to chapter 55. There we encountered a familiar invitation. Starting in verse 1 it says..."Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare." What an appropriate invitation even in our own day! This invitation is very similar to the one Jesus gave when He stood on the first day of the feast of tabernacles and invited everyone who was thirsty to come to him and drink. The basis

for that invitation and for the one given in John 4 to the thirsty woman in Samaria to drink His "living water" is surely found in the opening verses of Isaiah 55.

That paragraph is followed by a familiar verse. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." I know in my own life, when I'm walking through something difficult, it's often tempting to question and second-guess God. This verse challenges me & encourages me to remember that God and I are not on the same playing field. Just as heaven is higher than the earth, God's ways & thoughts are higher than mine...and rightly so. This verse helps me to let go & trust God at a deeper level in my life.

Another familiar portion of Isaiah 55 relates to the promise that is given about the Word of God. "So it is with my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty. But will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." There is a whole lot of important theology tied up in that little statement. God's purposes are never thwarted. His plan is never overturned. Not by a rebellious nation, or a disobedient, and certainly not by the likes of you and me. God's eternal purposes stand.

Well our reading today ended on a somber note. Though the long- range future would be bright for God's people, the short-term prediction was punishment and exile. This was because the watchmen of Israel -- the religious leaders were blind, asleep, uncaring and selfish. Verse 12 says..."Come, each one cries, let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better." That seems to be a reality for some in our own day in age doesn't it? A lot of watchmen today are asleep and because of their foolishness, many unsuspecting people are rushing head first toward destruction with no one to sound the warning. We must rise up and be the watchmen. The challenge is to us!!

Well as we close out today I want to commend you for being faithful and consistent in God's word. Be encouraged that God's word does not return empty or void. Have a great day!