

### **The Final Judgment of the Wicked and the Full Salvation of the Righteous**

We have arrived to the last chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, the 8<sup>th</sup> century seer to Israel. We have read in many chapters of this prophecy of the purpose and plan of God to bring salvation to His people from His judgment, bringing them into a blessed and eternal relationship with Himself. We have read of the Servant of the Lord, which were prophecies of Jesus Christ, through Whom God would secure the redemption and deliverance of His people into a state of blessedness with God. God would also overthrow His enemies through His Servant, bringing them to their eternal ruin. In this last chapter of Isaiah before us, we read of the future realization of all of God's purposes in which He brings to pass "**The Final Judgment of the Wicked and the Full Salvation of the Righteous.**" Let us read Isaiah 66.

<sup>1</sup>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?

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>"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;

<sup>4</sup>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."

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>"The sound of an uproar from the city!  
A sound from the temple!  
The sound of the LORD,  
rendering recompense to His enemies!

<sup>7</sup>“Before she was in labor  
she gave birth;  
before her pain came upon her  
she delivered a son.

<sup>8</sup>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.

<sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,  
all you who love her;  
rejoice with her in joy,  
all you who mourn over her;  
<sup>11</sup>that you may nurse and be satisfied  
from her consoling breast;  
that you may drink deeply with delight  
from her glorious abundance.”

<sup>12</sup>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.

<sup>13</sup>As one whom his mother comforts,  
so I will comfort you;  
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup>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.

<sup>15</sup>“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.

<sup>16</sup>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.

<sup>17</sup>“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.

<sup>18</sup>“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, <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.

<sup>22</sup>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.

<sup>23</sup>From new moon to new moon,  
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,  
all flesh shall come to worship before Me,  
declares the LORD.

<sup>24</sup>“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.”

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Here is an outline that may assist us in understanding our passage:

1. True Worship and False (vs. 1-4)
2. Assurance for those who tremble at His Word (vs. 5-14)
3. Divine judgment upon false worshippers (vs. 15-17)
4. World-wide pilgrimage to the Temple of God (vs. 18-24)

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This last chapter of Isaiah deals with the familiar themes of judgment and blessing. It would seem that the prophet was addressing the people who are (or would be) serving in the temple who thought themselves to be worshipping God, but because of their wicked hearts, God did not regard their worship. They were under His judgment, even while they thought that they were objects of His favor. God would bring His judgment upon them. But looking beyond God’s judgment of the wicked, the future holds forth hope for “Israel”, His people, which God will bless forever.

## **I. True Worship and False (vs. 1-4)**

In this first portion of this prophecy, the true people of God are distinguished from those who are not. The manner of distinguishing and identifying them was not according to their own conception; rather, how they regarded and responded to His Holy Word was the way in which God identified His people, distinguishing them from all others.

We read in **verse 1** God speaking. God declares that He is the Creator and Ruler of all that He has made.

<sup>1</sup>*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?*

These words are probably familiar to your ears. They were quoted by Stephen in Acts 7 in the sermon that resulted in him being martyred by the Jewish men who heard him. Stephen was proclaiming that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Savior of Israel, when He was accused of blasphemy and brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin for judgment. We read of what precipitated the conflict in **Acts 6:8ff**. There we read the following:

<sup>8</sup>And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. <sup>10</sup>And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. <sup>11</sup>Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” <sup>12</sup>And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. <sup>13</sup>They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; <sup>14</sup>for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” <sup>15</sup>And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel. (Acts 6:8-15)

Stephen began to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the gathered people. These were Jewish people, who believed themselves to be in God’s favor. The ground of their confidence was that God had given to them His law, that they worshipped God in His temple in Jerusalem, and that they were dwelling in the Land of Promise that God had given to them. But Stephen taught them that these things did not commend them to God. They were no proof that they were in favored standing before Him. Stephen recited the history of God’s dealings with His people. It was in this speech that Stephen quoted God’s words recorded before us in Isaiah 66:1. He did so to prove that God could not be manipulated or coerced in being favorable to a people because of the manner in which they worshipped Him. Stephen declared to them these words:

“Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ (Acts 7:2, 3)

As Stephen rehearsed the history of redemption, he demonstrated that God had manifested His presence in the past and had maintained a relationship with His people, and this was before God had given Israel His law, before the temple had been built, and even when His people dwelled outside of the Promised Land that He later gave to His people. We read more of Stephen’s words:

<sup>44</sup>“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, <sup>45</sup>which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, <sup>46</sup>who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup>But Solomon built Him a house.

Then we read of Stephen quoting Isaiah 66:1:

<sup>48</sup>However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:

<sup>49</sup>Heaven is My throne,  
And earth is My footstool.  
What house will you build for Me? says the LORD,  
Or what is the place of My rest?

<sup>50</sup>Has My hand not made all these things?'

<sup>51</sup>“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. <sup>52</sup>Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, <sup>53</sup>who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.” (Acts 7:48-53)

Stephen declared as God Himself had declared before him that God is not interested principally in external religious ritual, but rather He has purposed to dwell with His people who know Him and who order their lives according to His Word that He had given them.

The truth that God Himself declared in Isaiah 66, that Stephen declared in Acts 6 and 7, is the same truth that Solomon had declared many years earlier when He dedicated the temple when it was first built in Jerusalem. On that occasion Solomon declared:

<sup>22</sup>Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven; <sup>23</sup>and he said: “LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. <sup>24</sup>You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is this day. <sup>25</sup>Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’ <sup>26</sup>And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father.

<sup>27</sup>“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! <sup>28</sup>Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today: <sup>29</sup>that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. <sup>30</sup>And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive. (1 Kings 8:22-30)

Solomon declared that the earthly temple was insufficient to house God for He “fills” all things since He made all things. This not in the sense that God is *in everything*, for that is the false religion of pantheism; rather, the idea is that God is *everywhere*. He is Spirit and cannot be confined to space.<sup>1</sup>

When God declared, “Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool”, He was expressing the truth that He rules over heaven and earth. He is the sovereign Lord over all of His creation. Since His nature is such and He is of such power, any attempt is futile to confine Him to a place of worship or to manipulate Him through serving Him in a ritualistic manner. The design of beginning this passage in this way is to show how ignorant and wicked are persons who attempt to appease or worship Him by performing mere external rituals in a localized place, such as the temple. As Paul would later say, “God dwells not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

God continues to speak in **verse 2**:

***<sup>2</sup>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.***

External things were legitimately used in the worship of God, but not as means to appease Him. He ordained His service so that He might instruct and enable His people how to know Him and how to live before Him. But as Calvin once wrote,

“But foolish mortals have this disease deeply seated in them, that they transform God according to their inclination, though He appointed external worship not for His sake, but for our advantage.”

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Psalm 50:9-12; Amos 5:21-25

God has no regard for those who attempt to appease Him and serve Him through ritual. The one to whom He shows regard is the one who is humble and serves Him as the Sovereign King, the one who waits humbly to do His every bidding (Psalm 51:17). God described the one to whom He shows His favor, he “trembles at My word.” This shows forth the high regard that His people have toward His revealed Word, that which we have contained in our Holy Bible. We should be very humble and very eager to hear and respond to whatever God instructs us to do through its pages. This love and high regard for the Word of God is a manifestation of an internal condition, the state of the heart, which may or may not exist when externals are observed.

We should be suspicious if and when “externals”, even rituals, are emphasized whether or not genuine internal piety exists. A person who claims to believe and serve God but is not humble or who does not have a reverential submission to God’s Word is deluding Himself that God is looking upon him with favor.

If a man’s heart is not right with God, none of his religious efforts are accepted by God. What he may regard as doing great things that would most certainly render God favourable to him are actually the cause of aggravating God’s disregard and even disgust toward him. We read of this in **verse 3**.

***<sup>3</sup>“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;***

Whereas God has His eye on the humble and contrite worshipper, God has no regard for any other, though they are very zealous and “sacrificial” in their efforts to “worship” Him. Their worship is evil. An ancient Israelite who sacrificed an animal in worship and yet did not submit to His Word was not the object of God’s favor, but rather he was regarded no better than a murderer and an idolater and as one who offered abominable things to the Lord. So it is the one who seeks to “serve” the Lord in any way, but who was not humble and contrite, who was not truly desiring and seeking to do His will. God regards such ones as culpable. “They have chosen their own ways”, even as they delight in their defections and perverted worship. They invite God’s displeasure and judgment. He will not disappoint them, as the next verse shows.

***<sup>4</sup>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.”***

He will judge them. Because they refused to hear His Word, but persisted in their rebellion to His rule over them, because and insisted on doing those things that were contrary to His will, God would choose the manner in which He would punish them.

These people who were under God’s wrath would receive the things which they feared. They had not feared God or His word, but other fears had lead them in their superstitious and corrupt religious practices. So it is with all idolaters. Not the fear of God, but the fear of personal loss drives them. But they will suffer loss in the things for which they were so afraid to lose, they would suffer His punishment in ways they were hoping to escape.

We next read that...

## **II. Assurance for those who tremble at His Word (vs. 5-14)**

The Lord next addresses His people, those who have heard, believed, and ordered their lives according to His Word, His revealed will. First the prophet called to attention the people of God, and then he quoted God directly. We read in **verse 5**:

*<sup>5</sup>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.*

The Lord shows favor on them who tremble before Him and seek to do His will. They suffer for trying to order their lives in a manner pleasing to Him, and He takes notice of this and comes to vindicate them before the oppressors. The Lord has regard for the ones who are humble before Him and are attempting to do His will. They are ones who are rejected by the “worshippers” who think they are right with God, but are not. These hypocrites thought they were serving God in their rejection of these humble ones. But God in His own time will deal with them for having done so. The description of the persecutors seems to fit the religious Jews treated the early Christians with contempt and maltreatment in Jerusalem. God judged them when He destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the other cities of Judea by the Romans in AD 70. The words of the next verse may speak to this event.

*<sup>6</sup>“The sound of an uproar from the city!  
A sound from the temple!  
The sound of the LORD,  
rendering recompense to His enemies!*

The inhabitants of the earthly Jerusalem are described as crying out as they are being judged. The Lord Himself is punishing them for their sins.

Again, when or to what historical situation refer? Most commentators seem not to know. Calvin wrote:

“It is uncertain what are the enemies whom he describes; for this passage may be explained as relating to the Babylonians, whose destruction was the deliverance of the church.”

Calvin is referring to God’s judgment on Babylon when it was destroyed by the Persians, which resulted in the release of Jews to return to their homeland. But I do not think this is right. The destruction does not seem to be of the Babylonians but of the temple and Jews. The commentator **H. C. Leupold** wrote, “We seem to be totally at a loss as to the historical incident that the prophet has in mind.”<sup>2</sup> Others have suggested that these words are directed to a corrupt religious system which existed in about 400 BC after the temple had been rebuilt.<sup>3</sup> I think that it is best to understand this as a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus pronounced toward the end of His ministry. God destroyed the city due to its corrupt leaders and their refusal to respond to the Lord Jesus, their Messiah.

But beginning with **verse 7**, the Lord reveals that He will revitalize His people, the true “Zion”, or as the apostle Paul would later call, “the Jerusalem above” (Gal. 4:26).

*<sup>7</sup>“Before she was in labor  
she gave birth;  
before her pain came upon her  
she delivered a son.*

Although God judged the persecutors of His people, out of His judgment comes new life. An expectant mother is described as being in labor. It is an emblem of one who waits with anticipation and longing through a period

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<sup>2</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, Vol. 2 (Baker Book House, 1971), p. 373.

<sup>3</sup> Watts in the **Word Commentary**

of severe difficulty to the time when new life may be enjoyed. Some may see this as a reference to the birth of the church which was a new community which was born out of Jerusalem's difficulty and destruction in AD 70. Others would see it speaking of the future resurrection of believers who come forth to life. All believers of all time await their sojourn in this world in this manner. We long for the time when we will be delivered from sin and this body of death. Perhaps the end of time at the Second Coming of Christ is in view.

**Revelation 12:1ff** speaks of Israel's birth of the Saviour in language very similar to this passage.

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

<sup>3</sup>And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. <sup>5</sup>She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

But where the imagery in the Revelation is of Israel giving birth to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the imagery of Isaiah 66:7 is of "Zion" giving birth to a multitude of "citizens", even a nation, even the establishment and expansion of the kingdom of God. This is a prophecy of the advance of the Gospel in this church age after the judgment of God had come upon those who had rejected and crucified their Messiah. Here are the words of **Matthew Henry**:

But this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian church in the world, and the replenishing of that family with children which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time and with little pains compared with the vast product. The apostles, even before they travailed, brought forth, and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb (Psa. 110:3). The success of the gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself till it took hold even of *the ends of the earth*. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out there were 3,000 souls added to the church. And, when this glorious work was once begun, it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined, *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed*. He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.<sup>4</sup>

The next verse explains further that this is how we should understand this prophecy:

<sup>8</sup>*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.*  
<sup>9</sup>*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.*

The Lord encourages His people to be assured that He will bring this to pass. Language is used which is reminiscent of the Exodus when a nation was born in a day when Israel was taken out of Egypt. What He did then, He will do again. The Lord fulfils all His promises and sees to it that all His decrees come to pass.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 4 (Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), p. 392.

**Verse 10** describes God's blessedness upon His people, even "Jerusalem" repopulated with citizens who are devout, committed people to God and His Word, who love His Word and tremble at it for they have God's revealed Word in such high regard.

***<sup>10</sup>“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,  
all you who love her;  
rejoice with her in joy,  
all you who mourn over her;***

Much of what the Christian rejoices over is yet unrealized. But we are to order our lives and have our hearts governed by the certain prospect of realization. The response to the promises of God should be one of joyful praise in anticipation of this glorious time. We read on in **verse 11**:

***<sup>11</sup>that you may nurse and be satisfied  
from her consoling breast;  
that you may drink deeply with delight  
from her glorious abundance.”***

"Jerusalem" is depicted as a mother who is nursing her children. The people of God may look forward to a time when that new life will be experienced and enjoyed. The people of God, Zion itself, will be as a mother nursing who is giving life and vitality to her new born child.

***<sup>12</sup>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.  
<sup>13</sup>As one whom his mother comforts,  
so I will comfort you;  
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.***

God conveys to His people that He is at peace with Him and that they can and will enjoy this state of peace. He compares His people with nursing babies who are happy and content as they sit on their mother's lap, who is watching over them and nourishing them. And so, the conditions of peace will prevail between God and His people everywhere. Peoples from every nation will be worshipping and glorifying God. Jerusalem--the people of God-- will be favored and comforted, cared for and admired. The blessing of God continually comes to them as a river flowing continually brings life-giving water to them.

***<sup>14</sup>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.***

Then God's people will be the ones who experience fullness even as the enemies of God receive their just reward. It will be a cause of great joy to enjoy His blessedness and to see His power on our behalf. But His enemies will be objects of His indignation. In this way we may look and hope with joy to our future realization of His full and final salvation. In the light of these truths we may also avoid the foolishness of envying the wicked in their present prosperity knowing their certain end.

### **III. Divine judgment upon false worshippers (vs. 15-17)**

We read in **verse 15**:

***<sup>15</sup>“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.***

As a warrior coming on His chariot from heaven, the Lord will come and render His vengeance upon His enemies.<sup>5</sup> He comes in a manner likened to a severe thunderstorm sending out “fire”, or lightening, to destroy His adversaries. He is coming with His armies to fight against and conquer those who oppose Him and His people. This appears to be an answer to Isaiah’s earlier prayer in 64:1ff.

We then read in **verse 16**:

***<sup>16</sup>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.***

The Lord comes with His sword swinging and flaying His enemies. Divine anger is displayed as a mighty warrior in battle who slays all his enemies before him.

***<sup>17</sup>“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.***

The ones who had dedicated themselves to idols and sought to put away “sin” from themselves but with view to something other than seeking the true God, these ones, who were in reality unclean hypocrites, shall encounter their end.

“Hypocrites and wicked men shall not finally escape with impunity, because God perceives all their actions, and schemes, and thoughts; and that they gain nothing by their evasions, as if they were never to be dragged to the judgment.”<sup>6</sup>

They cannot hide behind the mask of hypocrisy. God sees through them and into their hearts and the time will come when they will be brought before His glory and their true condition will be discovered and disclosed.

#### **IV. World-wide pilgrimage to the true Temple of God (vs. 18-24)**

The Lord then describes His people, those whom He knows intimately, that they will come to “Zion” to see His glory. They will come in faith to Him, even as they all journey unto spiritual Zion where the glory of God is manifested and to which they are drawn.

***<sup>18</sup>“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, <sup>19</sup>and I will set a sign among them.***

Verse 18 is difficult to interpret. There are two widely different opinions. First, some say the ones whom the Lord addresses are the apostate Israelites whom God judges. The English translation suggests this, for the pronoun “their”, as in “their works” and “their thoughts” would refer to the wicked that are clearly identified in verse 17. If this is the right way to understand this, then what is being said is that the Lord will judge the wicked apostates who are among His people, but out of them He will cause a remnant to know Him and they would in

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rev. 19:11-18; also Deut. 33:26; Ps. 18:9ff

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin

turn take news of His glorious judgment and salvation to the Gentile world. This, then, would be a prophecy of what our Lord accomplished when He came to Israel, presented Himself to them, suffered their rejection which culminated in the destruction of most of the nation, but the remnant that He preserved for Himself, even the apostles and the early Jewish believers embraced the Messiah in faith and then after His resurrection took the gospel into the Gentile world.

The second interpretation sees the pronouns in the expressions “their” works” and “their” thoughts, to be a description of those who are the Lord’s people, not His enemies. If this is the case, then verse 18 would be regarded as an adversative statement. In other words, whereas verse 17 sets forth the end of the wicked, in contrast to them, the Lord knows His people, and He will send them out into the world to proclaim His glory to the nations.

Regardless of either interpretation, the outcome is the same. God will send forth His people “from Zion” into the world, to take forth news of His glory in salvation to the Gentiles, resulting in those Gentiles coming to the glory of God in Zion. In other words, this is a prophecy of the advance of the kingdom of God in this church age.

Take note also the importance of this great work of God. This is what God had originally intended for Israel to accomplish in the world. They were to fulfil God’s promise (and mandate) to Abraham that in him “all the nations of the earth would be blessed”, that is, His covenant people would include people from all nations and tribes of the earth. But the nation of Israel as a political, national entity, had failed miserably in this effort. As Paul that rather than the Jews leading the Gentiles to glorify God, they had led the Gentiles to blaspheme Him (Rom. 2:27). Nevertheless, here we see prophesied, and in the New Testament we have recorded, that God through the church, “Israel” under the new covenant, was able to fulfil God’s purpose through Abraham. Indeed, through Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, God judged those who rejected His Son, but He took that remnant, those who had repented of sin and believed on His Son, and through them He is accomplishing His work in history. Through the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, the glory of God is being shown forth in all the world. And through this gospel multitudes of Gentiles have come, are coming, and will be coming unto Zion, the “city of our God, the city whose Builder and Maker is God (Cf. Heb. 11:10). Yes, even now we are all on this pilgrimage of faith traveling up to Zion, where we will dwell with God and His people in eternity. As the writer to the Hebrew Christians declared,

<sup>22</sup>But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, <sup>23</sup>to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, <sup>24</sup>to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Heb. 12:22-24)

**Verse 19** continues:

*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.*

Some see the previous verses speaking of the Second Coming and that here the survivors of that event are sent out into the world during the millennium to witness to the nations. But this passes over completely the glory of God in this gospel age. Reformed interpreters, however, have seen the judgment in the earlier verses as speaking to what occurred in AD 70 and the outworking of that was that a remnant of Jews--Christians--went into all the world and preached the Gospel and many were converted to Christ. The lands described here could be those referred to in the book of Acts which were the places where Paul had such a fruitful ministry.

We then read in **verse 20**:

*<sup>20</sup>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.*

Then “they” (converted Gentiles?) will bring (Jewish?) brethren back to the Lord. They would be brought as a sacrifice to God dedicated to Him. Paul saw His work of evangelism of the Gentiles to be this kind of spiritual sacrifice that He was bringing unto the Lord. We read in Romans 11:15, 16,

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, <sup>16</sup>that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. <sup>17</sup>Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. (Rom 15:1 NKJ)

We then read in **Isaiah 66:21**:

*<sup>21</sup>And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.*

These Gentiles will even be elevated to the lofty status of priests, an unheard of notion in ancient Israel, but realized even to a broader extent than here envisioned as indicated in 1 Peter 2:5: “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

*<sup>22</sup>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.*

The people of God will endure. They will enjoy eternal life.

*<sup>23</sup>From new moon to new moon,  
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,  
all flesh shall come to worship before Me,  
declares the LORD.*

Perpetual worship will exist, not just on special days, but always, eternally. People from all over the world are brought to be Sabbath keepers, seeking to worship God in truth.

*<sup>24</sup>“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.”*

But the rest will be destroyed. They will not encounter life but only death. They will encounter eternal ruin and shame. The curse of God will abide on them.

Let us conclude with a few simple words of exhortation:

1. Let us highly value the Holy Scriptures. Love, delight, and dependence on the Word of God is one of the clearest indicators that a true work of God’s saving grace has been wrought in the soul. To whom does God regard and show favor? God declared:

But this is the one to whom I will look:  
he who is humble and contrite in spirit  
and trembles at My word. (Isa. 66:2)

2. Use the love of the Word of God as a test to determine not only the reality of your profession to be a child of God, but also to determine your spiritual health and vitality as a Christian. Do you treasure God’s Word? Do you delight to read it, study it, speak about it? Do you enjoy being with those who do? Do not assume that you are right with God because you go through the motions of ritual, whether it be church going or ordering your life

according to a moral standard that is detached from His Word. Hell will be populated with many ritualists and moralists, many church members and attenders. Do you love God's Word? Do others know that you do?

3. Let us fulfill God's purposes for His people by making His glory known through the full and frequent proclamation of the Gospel to the world in which He has placed us. Let us be as the psalmist:

<sup>25</sup>My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;  
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

<sup>26</sup>The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.  
Let your heart live forever!

<sup>27</sup>All the ends of the world  
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,  
And all the families of the nations  
Shall worship before You.

<sup>28</sup>For the kingdom is the LORD's,  
And He rules over the nations.

<sup>29</sup>All the prosperous of the earth  
Shall eat and worship;  
All those who go down to the dust  
Shall bow before Him,  
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

<sup>30</sup>A posterity shall serve Him.  
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,

<sup>31</sup>They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,  
That He has done this. (Psa. 22:25-31)

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<sup>20</sup>Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, <sup>21</sup>to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:20f)