

Isaiah 58

This chapter begins the section of Isaiah (Isaiah 58:1-66:24) titled, *That she has received of the Lord's hand Double for all her sins* (Isaiah 40:2). You can read the notes associated with Isaiah 40:2 for more input relating to this topic.

Is. 58:1 "Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, And declare to My people their transgression, And to the house of Jacob their sins.

Isaiah is commanded by God to *declare to the people their transgression and sins*. He is to do so forcefully—*Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet*. Just as a trumpet was blown to assemble the Jewish people during Old Testament times (Judges 6:34; Jeremiah 4:5 etc.), so Isaiah's voice would be used to assemble the nation for the purpose of hearing God's words. In verses 2-4, Isaiah, with a raised *voice*, will *declare to* the nation her *sins*. Obviously, just as Isaiah was instructed in this instance to *raise his voice*, it is within the realm of God's will to raise our voice during seasons when such things are proper.

Is. 58:2 "Yet they seek Me day by day, and delight to know My ways, As a nation that has done righteousness, And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions, They delight in the nearness of God.

This verse confirms that the Hebrew people, rather than possessing a passion for God's heart and purpose, are obsessed with unfruitful religious tradition. Note that the verse does not state that Israel is *a nation that has done righteousness* but rather is "*As*" (emphasis mine) *a nation that has done righteousness*. There is no doubt that they appear to *delight* in God's *ways* and *the nearness of God* through temple worship. However, their hearts are far from Him, serving Jehovah for nothing more than personal gain, social recognition, and self exaltation. When one lives as such, the natural by-product is a warped view of the Creator, as confirmed by Isaiah's statements in verses 3.

Note: So long as the Talmud is viewed as more authoritative than God's word (the Talmud being a series of man-made rules and regulations—read the notes associated with Isaiah 52:13 for more input), the Jewish nation can never grow past the deadness that accompanies religious tradition and enter into the realm of true "life."

Is. 58:3 'Why have we fasted and Thou dost not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and Thou dost not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And drive hard all your workers.

Because the subject of this section of Isaiah 58 is the "*fast*," we need to take a moment to define the term. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* defines it as follows:

Deliberate and sustained abstinence from all food for a specific period of time.

When dead religion is allowed to take precedence over intimacy with Jehovah, the natural by-product is to blame the Creator for that which He is not responsible. The issue addressed here has nothing to do with God failing to honor the *fast*. The issue is that He refuses to honor those who *fast* for personal gain or social recognition. The Pharisees in Jesus' day, who were externally

committed to an impersonal, powerless, and unfruitful religious system, were weighed down with similar sin (Matthew 6:16-18).

It is apparent from Isaiah 58:3 that those blaming God unjustly were fasting based on improper motives. In fact, Isaiah states concerning these individuals: *...on the day of your fast you find your desire*. Some view this phrase as pointing to the carrying out of business transactions during seasons of fasting. Others view it as making reference to pleasure in general. Whatever the case, the proper *fast* is a time of self denial for the purpose of enhancing one's understanding of, and intimacy with, the God of the universe. It was never meant to be a season of self indulgence or self gratification, as the following verses verify. Therefore, it is not a time to *drive hard all your workers* for additional personal gain.

Is. 58:4 "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high.

Rather than fasting *for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist* (things which occur when individuals walk out of fellowship with God), those who *fast* according to God's will do so for the purpose of making their *voice heard on high*. The Jewish people were not fasting as such; thus, Isaiah 58:4 begins to describe the true purpose of fasting—that of bringing believers into a place of intimacy with the Creator. It is then that the redeemed can truly worship God; for worship is a natural by-product of oneness with the only Being worthy of our devotion, reverence, and adoration (read Psalm 29:2, 96:9, and Romans 12:1-2).

Is. 58:5 "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed, And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord?"

The individual who fasts is to *humble himself*; for fasting is a time *for bowing one's head like a reed, And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed*. There is no doubt that humility is the by-product of uninterrupted time in God's presence (read Deuteronomy 17:18-20); for time in His presence reveals the flaws in our behavior that only He can repair. How could one be proud after spending time at the feet of the one and only Sovereign? Fasting, therefore, is a time for drawing near to God so He might reveal Himself in all His glory. The result is brokenness and a greater sense of awe in the inner most being of the worshipper. Consequently, one who fasts with a pure heart finds no place for self exaltation or personal indulgence, as is confirmed by the next two verses.

Is. 58:6 "Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free, And break every yoke?"

Fasting should result in the worshipper being freed from all sorts of *bonds*, in fact, *every yoke* that seeks to deter him. Have you ever wondered why time alone with Jehovah results in a change of behavior? One of the major factors is that you have situated yourself in the presence of the only Being who never misbehaves. There is no doubt that what the worshipper places in his mind expresses itself in the form of behavior. Therefore, we are encouraged to hang out with the *wise* if we desire to be *wise* (Proverbs 13:20).

Is. 58:7 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

The proper fast should cause one to desire to feed *the hungry*, shelter *the homeless*, and cloth the needy. Why? The fast brings the worshipper into closer fellowship with God, the by-product of which is humility. Consequently, since there is no room for the worshipper to view himself as superior to anyone else, seeking to help the less fortunate should naturally follow. It is imperative that we to keep James 2:1-9 in mind as we deal with the needs of the less fortunate.

Is. 58:8 "Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard."

When Israel fasts as described in previous three verses, she will receive the blessings recorded in Isaiah 58:8-12. When will she fast as such? When she repents at the end of the Tribulation and accepts Jesus as Messiah. It is then that she will be healed both spiritually and physically. She will also become righteous as a result of the blessings of the *new covenant* (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Not only this, but she will have the awesome privilege of being guarded by God's *glory*. No wonder her *light will break out like the dawn*, meaning that she will greatly prosper throughout

the Millennium. Dead religion, inundated with tradition, can never bring about such blessing. This is the very point that Jehovah is making in these verses.

Is. 58:9 "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

The Lord will answer the prayers of the nation (Israel) in conjunction with, and subsequent to, her spiritual regeneration at the end of the Tribulation. Dead religious activity can never bring about results of this sort. Once every Jew on the earth is spiritually regenerated (shortly before Christ returns), strife and *wickedness* will cease within Israel.

Is. 58:10 And if you give yourself to the hungry, And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness, And your gloom will become like midday.

The spiritual regeneration of the nation will cause her to feed *the hungry* and assist *the afflicted*. The result will be honor and renown among the Gentile nations. In fact, according to verses such as Isaiah 14:1-2 and Zechariah 8:23, the Gentiles will serve the Jews during the Millennium.

Is. 58:11 "And the Lord will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

The spiritually regenerated Israel that enters the Millennium will not only receive divine guidance from Jehovah, but will also be satisfied spiritually as well as strengthened physically. She *will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail*, pointing to outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the nation, a topic which Jesus addresses with similar wording in John 4:14 and 7:38. There is no doubt that all Jews on the earth (at the end of the Tribulation) will receive the Holy Spirit when they repent of their sin and accept Jesus as Messiah. Consequently, this same Holy Spirit will guide and empower them throughout the Millennium as well as the Eternal Order (the Eternal Order is addressed in the New Testament only—Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 11:9-10; 12:22-24; Revelation 21-22). It is obvious that the Jews will be a blessing to the Gentiles as they serve the Hebrew people throughout the Millennium (Isaiah 14:1-2).

Is. 58:12 "And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

Just as Isaiah 57:13 confirmed that the Jews will one day inherit *the land* promised the Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 15:18, Isaiah 58:12 does the same. In fact, the book of Isaiah is inundated with verses that confirm the same. The Jews will *rebuild the ancient ruins and raise up the age-old foundations*. She will, therefore, *be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in which to dwell*. This will occur as she enjoys all the benefits of the Messianic Kingdom.

Is. 58:13 ¶ "If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your own pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, And shall honor it, desisting from your own ways, From seeking your own pleasure, And speaking your own word,

There is no doubt that the observance of the *sabbath* during Old Testament times was a barometer, gauge, or measurement as to one's commitment to God's standard prescribed in the Mosaic Law. Therefore, if a Jew was serious about abiding by the Law, he automatically kept the *sabbath*; for one dovetailed into the other (read Ezekiel 20:11-13, 16, 19-24; 22:26). But what

was the full purpose of the *sabbath*?

After creating *the heavens and the earth*, God *rested on the seventh day* (Genesis 2:1-3). He *rested* because what had been created was a finished work. He later instituted the *sabbath* as a day of *rest* for man (Exodus 20:8-11), a day on which no physical labor was to be performed. But is this all the *sabbath* was about? It is interesting that man, instead of seeking to understand the spiritual significance of the *sabbath*, has generally viewed it as a day of *rest* from one's physical labor. The Pharisees in Jesus' day were guilty of the same and missed the significance of His coming (read Matthew 12:1-14 as just one example).

What then is the meaning of the *sabbath*? Before answering, we must first realize that God *rested on the seventh day* because that which He had created was a finished *work*. In fact, Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31 teach that there was an *evening* and a *morning* associated with each of the first six days of creation. However, even though *the seventh day* had a beginning and an end, Genesis 2:1-3 states nothing about it. Could this be pointing to the fact that this *day* has never ended in the spiritual sense and that God continues to *rest* as such even today? After all, an eighth *day* is never mentioned in the Scriptures. Maybe God wants us to understand that just as creation was a finished *work* when *He rested on the seventh day*, the believer has the privilege of having the *work* of the cross, a finished *work*, applied to his life through his own personal faith in the Son (proving that to accept God's free gift through faith is anything but a work on the believer's part). Therefore, the redeemed can rest from their labor as they receive and enjoy all that the Father has provided through that selfless act in 30 AD. Let's take a moment to address how salvation is linked to the *sabbath* in the Scriptures.

Three types of salvation are mentioned in the Scriptures:

1. Salvation from the penalty of sin when Jesus is accepted (through one's own personal faith) as Savior—Romans 10:9-10. It occurs once in the believer's life; for it is a finished work on God's part, never to be repeated. Therefore, salvation is unattainable through self effort. It is a free gift, granted through Christ's finished work on the cross, when one chooses to accept Him through faith.
2. Daily salvation from the power of sin as the believer yields, on a moment by moment basis, to Christ's life within—2Corinthians 2:15; Romans 5:10. This is ongoing, beginning when Christ is accepted as Savior. Consequently, it is unattainable through the believer's effort; for only Christ (not the believer) can defeat the enemy of the redeemed. This type of salvation, obviously, is accomplished through Christ alone, allowing the believer to rest as he enjoys that for which he was made.
3. The believer's salvation from the presence of sin addressed specifically in verses such as Romans 13:11, 1Thessalonians 5:8-9, and 2Timothy 2:10. This salvation occurs when the believer is taken to heaven at the point of physical death (2Corinthians 5:8). (Of course, when the Rapture occurs, all believers on the earth will be taken from the presence of sin and into heaven without experiencing physical death—1Thessalonians 4:15-17). This is accomplished without any work or labor on the part of the redeemed, confirming that it is God's blessing directed toward all who accept Him through faith.

We, therefore, can conclude the following concerning how the *sabbath* relates to salvation:

1. When a person accepts Christ, he or she experiences salvation from the penalty

of sin. This salvation is a finished work accomplished through Christ's death on the cross. It will never be repeated; so the believer can rest, as God did on the sabbath.

2. Daily salvation from the power of sin is accomplished through the believer yielding to the indwelling Christ (Romans 5:10; 6:13-14; Galatians 2:20), not through fruitless works or self effort. The believer can, therefore, rest, as God did on the sabbath.
3. And, of course, the believer's salvation from the presence of sin (which occurs when the believer no longer lives in his physical body) is also accomplished through Christ; for only by His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension is such a privilege made available to the redeemed. Therefore, the believer can rest as he looks forward to what lies ahead, just as God did on the sabbath.

Once a believer understands that he is incapable of saving himself from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and the presence of sin, and yields to the indwelling Christ as the only legitimate remedy, he is well on his way to entering into what the Scriptures describe as *Sabbath rest* (Hebrews 4:9-10). Jesus lived in this type of *rest* at His First Coming (Matthew 11:28-30). In fact, rather than do the work Himself, He allowed the Father to perform the work through Him as He yielded to His Father's life (John 14:10). He, therefore, came to demonstrate what life would look like lived by the life of Another, the "Another" being the Father. Can the believer live as such today? Of course he can—through yielding to Christ's life within him (Romans 5:10; 6:13; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:4). Therefore, the spiritual significance of the *sabbath* is much greater than ceasing from physical labor one day per week. Its spiritual significance has to do with the believer living every second of his stay on earth in communion with the Creator, trusting Him for salvation from the power of sin in every circumstance that comes his way. This lines up perfectly with Exodus 31:13:

***“But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.*”**

There is no doubt that Israel as a nation will fail to comprehend the spiritual significance of the *sabbath*, and how it relates to the three types of salvation addressed in the Scriptures, until she is spiritually regenerated at the end of the Tribulation. For the first time in her existence she will fully comprehend what it means to walk in *Sabbath rest* (Hebrews 4:9-10). There will be no more striving to earn her righteous standing or live a lifestyle of victory through legalism and enslavement to manmade regulations; for throughout the Millennium and the Eternal Order, she will experience *rest* by means of living by God's very life. In fact, she will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to love God with all her *heart, soul, mind and strength, and her neighbor as herself* (Luke 10:25-28). Obviously, rules, regulations, and Law can never bring about such powerful results. In fact, all the Law can produce is condemnation and death (2Corinthians 3:7-9).

It is intriguing that the *sabbath* will be observed during the Millennium (Ezekiel 46:1, 4, and 12). However, it will serve only as a memorial to the *sabbath rest* made available through Jesus. In fact, it will serve in much the same capacity as communion serves today, that of reminding the redeemed of what Christ has done (Luke 22:19; 1Corinthians 11:24-25). For more input relating to the *sabbath*, read the notes associated with Isaiah 56:2.

Is. 58:14 Then you will take delight in the Lord, And I will make you ride on the heights of the

earth; And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Once all of the Jews on the earth are spiritually regenerated at the end of the Tribulation, they *will take delight in the Lord*. Great blessings will follow during the Millennium—...*I will make you ride on the heights of the earth* (the Jews will have access to Millennial Jerusalem, situated on top of the tallest mountain in the world—read the notes associated with Isaiah 2:2-4). They will also, for the first time in the nation's existence, possess and inhabit all the land promised in Genesis 15:18—*And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father*. What a faithful God we serve!