

THE SAVIOUR'S GREAT INVITATION TO LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY AND TO WORSHIP THE LORD

ISAIAH 56:01–08

Introduction

The human race has the most unique opportunity imaginable, that of having worldwide peace, economic prosperity and justice. Peace among all people is possible. a society in which need has been eliminated is possible. A society in which citizens live in comfort and joy, treat others fairly and always do what is right is possible. incomprehensible! Unimaginable! Yet this is the very offer that God extends to the world — the salvation of society. his great invitation to every society and group of people of the world is to receive his gift of peace, prosperity, joy, justice and righteousness. This is the great message of the present Scripture As seen earlier, God's very special Servant, his Son Jesus Christ, died for the sins of the entire world (Isa 52:13-53:12). He died to offer salvation to the world. This is, The Saviour's Great Invitation to the World, Isaiah 55:1-56:8.

- I. The invitation to come to the LORD (vv. 55:1-5).
- II. The invitation to seek the LORD (vv. 55:6-13).
- III. The invitation to live righteously and to worship the LORD (vv. 56:1-8).

Isaiah 56:01–08 The Invitation to Live Righteously and to Worship the LORD

The third invitation is also a demand, a twofold plea. God's people are invited to live righteously and to worship Him. No greater privilege could be given a person than that of worshipping the LORD and being conformed to His righteous image. To be holy as God is holy and to live righteously as God is righteous is beyond comprehension; yet this is precisely the privilege offered to God's people. God's people are also invited to worship the LORD. To know the LORD personally is the summit of human experience. Imagine fellowshiping and communing with, praying and listening to God speak through His Holy Word, being assured and led by His Spirit, praising Him and offering up thanks to Him — all this and so much more is the high privilege of every true believer. But note that the invitation is also a demand. An option is not given. God's people have no choice. They *must* live righteously and faithfully worship the LORD.

1. The first plea is solemn and forceful, an urgent plea coming from God Himself. "Thus says the Lord" (vv. 1-2).
 - a. First, God pleaded with the people to live just and righteous lives. Observe God's law. Keep His commandments. Obey Him. Treat people justly and always do what is right. Why was God so forceful in demanding that the people live righteously? Because God's salvation was at hand. Isaiah foresaw that Israel would be set free from the Babylonian captivity. They would be given the opportunity to return to the
-

promised land. Thus, the people would need to prepare themselves by turning back to the LORD and obeying His commandments. However, when the day of liberty came, only a few Israelites were prepared. Only a few accepted God's offer of salvation and returned to Jerusalem. Most stayed behind. Why? Through the years, God's people had become settled in worldly Babylon. A spirit of unbelief gripped their hearts, and they were simply not willing to give up the jobs, homes, investments and businesses they had secured nor the carnal pleasures, comforts and recreation they enjoyed among the worldly Babylonians. Many had even begun to worship their idols, the false gods of the world.

For these reasons, God's people desperately needed to turn their lives around. Repentance and righteousness were demanded. The people needed to forsake their sins and turn back to God. They needed to respond to the invitation, the plea of God to live righteously. They needed to obey God and keep His holy commandments.

But note: God's plea was not given only to the exiles in Babylon. God's demand for all generations is for people to live righteous lives. Even the Jews who returned to the promised land soon slipped back into their worldly, wicked ways. Reading the prophets who preached during the period of restoration — Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Malachi — clearly shows this. Thus God's plea and demand for righteousness is extended to all people of all times. Everyone must turn away from the carnal comforts and fleshly pleasures of this world. They must turn away from and forsake wickedness, evil and sin. In the words of Scripture, God demands that we "live self-controlled, righteous and godly lives in this present world, while we look for that blessed hope — the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

Mat 5:20 *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."*

1 Cor 15:34 *Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God — I say this to your shame.*

Eph 6:13-14 *Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.*

Phil 1:9-11 *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.*

1 Tim 4:7 *Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.*

1 Tim 6:11-12 *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.*

Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

2 Pet 3:10-14 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

Note another fact as well. God forcefully demanded righteousness because the *day of righteousness*, the day of final judgment, would soon be revealed (v. 1). Judgment day was at hand. This is the meaning of the statement: “My righteousness will soon be revealed” (v. 1, NIV) (H. C. Leupold. *Exposition of Isaiah*, Vol. 1, p. 263.) Isaiah was predicting that a righteous *intervention* was about to take place on earth. God will soon execute a final judgment on all the unrighteous and ungodly of the earth. For this reason, people must turn away from sin and turn to God and His righteousness.

Mat 16:27 *“For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”*

Mat 25:31-44, 46 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

John 5:28-29 *“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”*

Jude 1:14-15 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

Rev 20:11-15 *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

- b. The second plea of God is to observe the Sabbath or weekly day of worship (v. 2). Keep in mind that observing the Sabbath was a *special sign* that God's people worshipped the true and living God (Jehovah, Yahweh). God established the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship so that people could rest their bodies and replenish their spirits. He even made the observance of the Sabbath one of His Ten Commandments: "Remember the seventh day to keep it holy" (Exo 20:8). Do not defile God's day of rest by working and neglecting worship. God established the day of rest and worship for every generation of people. The Jews set aside the seventh day as a day of rest because God had rested on the seventh day after creating the world. After Christ's resurrection, the early believers switched the day of rest and worship to the first day of the week because the LORD had risen on the first day. The first day of the week became known as "the LORD's day."

Mark 16:9 *When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.*

Acts 20:7 *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.*

1 Chr 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*

Rev 1:10-11 *On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches."*

Exo 20:8-10 *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.*

2. The LORD invites the foreigner and the eunuch to be part of His people (v. 3). Throughout the ancient world, there were Gentiles who became heartsick over the immoral and unjust cesspool society had become. As a result, the moral and just

laws of Israel attracted them; and some turned to the LORD to become followers (proselytes), of the Jewish religion. The LORD had always had His arms open for people of all races to come to Him (Num 10:29; Exo 12:48-49; Ruth 1:16). But when foreigners turned to the LORD, they feared they would not be as acceptable to Him as the Jews were. This was a natural fear, for God had appointed the Israelites to be His special witnesses to the world, the people through whom He would send His Word and the promised Messiah. Thus, the Israelites were set apart as a distinct, different people. Sometimes foreigners felt excluded, shut out, separated and cut off from God's promises and people. This was usually due to the fact that the Jews became prideful and exclusive in their religion, prejudiced and discriminatory toward others. Thus, some foreigners — even when they wanted to turn to the Jewish religion because of its high moral demands — felt unqualified, detached from God's people and unacceptable to God.

Eunuchs had a special handicap. Whether castrated, crushed or born disfigured, they could not bear children. Bearing children was extremely important to the Jewish race, for God had given Abraham the special promise of a large nation of descendants. Bearing children was so important that God had forbidden any Israelite to ever become a eunuch (Deut 23:1). But as with some other Scriptures, the Jews apparently misinterpreted this to mean that no eunuch could become a true follower of the LORD. However, this was never the meaning of the law. God's arms and invitation were always open to save eunuchs and to receive their worship (Acts 8:27-38).

3. God gives strong assurance to all foreigners and eunuchs. No person is excluded, shut out, separated or cut off from God's salvation or promises. His salvation is open to all eunuchs (all who have no spouse or are handicapped or disabled). However, note that God's promise to eunuchs is conditional (vv. 4-5). They must keep the Sabbath and live righteous lives, pleasing the LORD and holding fast to His covenant of commitment. If they are faithful to the LORD, they will be given a place before God in the temple and a name that is better than children. Their names will never be cut off but will live forever.
4. God's acceptance of foreigners is also conditional (vv. 6-8). For any unbelievers of any race to be accepted by the LORD, they must commit themselves to Him. They must love, obey and serve the LORD, and they must keep the day of worship holy. All unbelievers who make this commitment to the LORD are given four wonderful promises:
 - => They will be accepted in God's Holy mountain, His temple, His presence (v. 7).
 - => They will be filled with joy as they pray and worship the LORD.
 - => They will have their worship and offerings accepted by the LORD. This suggests that prior to their commitment, their worship was false, empty and unacceptable to God.

=> They will be accepted by God just as the Jews are accepted. Note that this is an oath sworn by God Himself.

No matter who people are — foreigners or eunuchs, unbelievers or backsliders, able or disabled, Jews or Gentiles, if they accept the salvation of the Saviour and commit their lives to the LORD, they will never be excluded. They will never be shut out, separated or cut off from God's salvation and promises.

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Mark 13:10 *“And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.”*

Mark 16:15 He said to them, *“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

Luke 12:8 *“I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.”*

Acts 15:11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.

Rom 10:13 For, *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ■