

THE SAVIOUR'S GREAT INVITATION TO THE WORLD ISAIAH 55:01–56:08

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).

I. Isaiah 55:01–05 Invitation to Come to the LORD

The first invitation is a cry from the depth of God's heart: Come! Everyone come. The invitation is not extended only to the Jews. God does not call only the religious and righteous to come. He calls everyone, including the ungodly and unrighteous. Note the Scripture and outline:

1. The people invited to come are those who have thirsty souls and poverty-stricken hearts. To thirst means to desire, crave, long after, yearn for, eagerly seek. To those whose souls are like a desert — dry and barren, eagerly seeking and yearning to have their thirst quenched — God says, "Come to me!"

To be poverty-stricken means to be poor, impoverished, distressed and in desperate need. To those whose souls are poverty-stricken — utterly famished, destitute, unable to find anything that will satisfy their emptiness — the LORD cries out, "Come to me!" Let all who are thirsty and poor come to the LORD.
 2. The offer of the LORD is salvation (v. 1). The thirsty, hungry soul can be saved and delivered from its thirst and hunger. The LORD offers streams of *living waters* to satisfy the dry, thirsty soul, and He offers wine and milk to satisfy the hungry heart. Keep in mind that water and food are the most valuable commodities in a dry, barren country. When travelling through desert areas, people will perish unless they have prepared themselves by securing water and food. So it is with the human soul. As people walk through life, they must secure the water and food that the LORD provides or else they will perish. What is the water and food that God provides?
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=> Jesus Christ is the living water of God.

John 4:10 *Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."*

John 7:37-38 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."*

=> Jesus Christ is the bread of life.

John 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

John 6:48-52 *"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*

3. What is the cost for God's water and food? Astoundingly, they are free, absolutely free. This fact suggests several points:

First, God's salvation is a *free gift*. It cannot be secured by money or by giving religious offerings or by working for it. If salvation were by works, the good deeds of people would put God in debt to them. God would owe them. If that were the case, God would be *subjected* to them, owing them salvation to pay His debt. But God cannot be *subjected* to any man. God is the LORD of the universe, ruling and reigning over all. All creatures are in debt to Him; He is in debt to no creature. Whatever He gives is from grace, *freely* given. He restates the point: God's salvation — the water and food that satisfy the human soul — is *freely* given. It is a gift.

Acts 13:39 *Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

Rom 3:23-24 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Rom 4:3-7 *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."*

Rom 5:15 *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!*

Rom 5:18-19 *Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Gal 3:10-14 *All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

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.*

Second, the LORD cares deeply for us. He longs to meet the hunger and thirst of our hearts by freely giving us the living water and the bread of life. When a gift is given without any expectation of payment, the gift reveals a caring heart. God is interested in our welfare He is concerned about us, cherishes us and holds us in the highest esteem. And He has proven His love by *freely* offering us the gift of salvation.

Third, the price of salvation was extremely costly to God. Salvation cost God the death of His very own Son. Christ paid the ransom for our sin. Through His death we are redeemed, set free from the bondages of sin and death, and given eternal life. Although we receive salvation freely, God paid an enormous price for our redemption.

John 1:29 *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Acts 2:23 *This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

Rom 5:8-10 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Rom. 5:19 *For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

4. The plea of God for people to come is urgent and compelling (v. 2). Come is an imperative that demands immediate attention. The life or death of the human soul is at stake, for the soul is as thirsty as a barren desert, and as empty as a starving man. Thus the appeal by God is pressing, requiring our utmost and immediate consideration. God makes a twofold plea:
 - a. Do not waste money or labour on things that do not satisfy. Note that God puts this plea in the form of a question, focusing on the fact that many people do just that. They spend their money on things that do not satisfy the human soul, things such as...
 - worldly pleasures and activities
 - immoral and illicit sexual behaviour
 - material possessions
 - fleeting and worthless adventures
 - acquiring or buying position, authority, power or fame

Carnal pleasures and worldly possessions cannot satisfy the human soul. Stimulating the flesh and securing the possessions or fame of this world will leave a person empty inside. This world with its bright lights, cheap thrills and get-rich-quick schemes will only make an individual more destitute. The person's soul will be like a *wasteland*, hungry and starving for something that will give it a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction.

Think of all the people whose primary objective in life is to get more — more money, more cars, more houses, more property and so on. They work as hard as they can, labouring day and night to make more money to buy even more things. Once people have enough to meet the necessities of life, they accumulate more money for one of at least three purposes:

- => to hoard it to satisfy the emptiness within their souls
 - => to become recognized as persons of wealth, authority and power
 - => to use it to meet the needs of the world and to carry the gospel of Christ to every living soul. (This is the only purpose that is truly justified in the eyes of God.)
- b. God's second plea is "Listen, listen carefully to me! Eat what is good! Be filled with my nourishment!" In most cases, excess money is used for worldly, carnal and selfish purposes. For this reason, God pleads with all of us to ask ourselves this question: Why do we spend money on things that do not nourish us and feed us spiritually? And why do we labour to purchase material things that do not satisfy? God provides the Water and Bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Everyone who truly comes to God receives the fullness of Christ. Christ floods the thirsty, hungry soul with the fullness of His Spirit:

=> love => goodness => fulfilment => joy
=> faithfulness => satisfaction => peace => meekness
=> assurance => patience => confidence => purpose
=> self control or discipline => gentleness or kindness

When Jesus Christ fills a person's soul, the individual walks victoriously in life, conquering and triumphing through all the trials and temptations that arise. Day by day the person is filled with assurance and confidence in the LORD's presence and guidance. This is the nourishment that Christ brings. He alone is the Water and Bread of life. He alone can meet every need to fill the human soul. He alone can keep man from dying of thirst and hunger.

5. God makes a wonderful promise to those who come to the LORD (v. 3). However, before the promise is stated, God again stresses how critical it is for people to come to Him. Two times in this one verse the LORD urges people to *hear*, to open their ears, because the issue involved is the life or death of the human soul. If people will listen and then heed what God says, that is, come to the LORD, God promises them two things:
- a. Their souls will live. They will be given *real life*, the Water and Bread of God Himself. They will receive all the fullness of Christ described above (v. 2).

John 10:10 *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

2 Tim 1:10 *But it [God's purpose] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

1 John 5:11-13 *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

- b. They will receive all the mercies and love God promised to David (see notes, 2 Sam 7:11-17). God will make the same covenant with those who truly come to Him that He made with David. His covenant with David included the great promise of an eternal descendant, a throne and a kingdom, all of which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Luke 1:30-33). Jesus Christ is the covenant, the fulfilment of the promises that God gives to man. Any agreement between God and man is based solely upon Christ. If people wish to approach God, they must approach Him through Christ and Christ alone (John 14:6).

Luke 1:30-33 *But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Acts 13:32-39 *"We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers, he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my son; today I have become your father.' God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.' So it is also stated elsewhere: 'You will not let your holy one see decay.' For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."*

6. The agent of salvation is the Saviour Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 4-5). It is the Messiah who fulfils God's promises to David, the Messiah who secures salvation for every living soul of every generation. Note that God has sent the Messiah to be His Witness to the people as well as their Leader and Commander. As their Leader and Commander, Christ has been given all authority throughout the universe: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mat 28:18; also see Num 24:17-19; Isa 9:6-7; Rev 12:5; 19:15-16). As God's witness, the Messiah will issue the call for all the Gentile nations of the earth to come to the LORD (v. 5).

While Christ was on earth, He ministered only in Palestine. No other nation felt the *direct impact* of His ministry during His lifetime. In addition, there were many nations that did not even exist while Christ was on earth. Yet Isaiah predicts that the day will come when nations will rush to Christ and see Him glorified. Since His death on the cross, Christ has been bearing strong witness to the nations of the earth. As a result, multitudes of people have rushed to Him for the salvation He purchased through His death on the cross of Calvary. This prophecy is being carried out day by day as people from all nations hear God's invitation to come to Him for salvation. But the ultimate fulfilment will take place when Christ returns to set up God's kingdom on earth. On that day, every human being will either come to the Lord or else face His terrifying judgment. For all men will worship Him as He sits on the throne of God's glory in the Holy City, Jerusalem (54:11-17). However until that day, the invitation of the LORD is extended to every human being:

Isa 55:1-2 *"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 labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."*

Mat 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Mat 22:2-3, 8-10 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come....Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

Rom 10:12-13 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

1 Tim 2:3-5 This is good, and pleases God our Saviour; who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

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.

Isa 1:18 “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

Isa 45:22 “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”

II. Isaiah 55:06–13 The Invitation to Seek the LORD

The second invitation is a strong imperative to seek the LORD. *To seek* means to look for and search for, inquire about, investigate, pursue, strive after. It also means to plead and cry for something to the point of struggling. Only a person who senses a deep need will seek the LORD with such urgency. And this is exactly the objective of God's invitation. There is an urgent need for every human being to seek the LORD. Note the Scripture and outline.

1. This second invitation includes a warning: people can wait too long. They fail to seek the LORD while He is near and still can be found. **Opportunities** are not always available to seek the LORD. Throughout the day, people's minds have to be focused on their work and other duties. A far greater opportunity to seek the LORD is found in the quietness of one's home or in the setting of the church. It is far easier to sense the LORD's presence in a quiet atmosphere than in the hustle and bustle of noisy surroundings. It is also not always easy for people to find God. People can harden their hearts to such a degree that they feel God is far off, completely out of reach.

Add the fact that people are creatures of conditioning, which means the more they misbehave, the more acceptable their sinful behaviour appears. For example, if people repeatedly commit immoral acts, their consciences can become dead, insensitive to sin. In that frame of mind they will naturally not seek the LORD as readily as they would if their hearts were not hardened but instead were open and sensitive to God. More important, God will have nothing to do with sinful behaviour. He is holy and cannot look upon sin; therefore, if people continue in their sinful ways, the LORD is forced to withdraw His presence. Thus, God gives this strong exhortation: "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near." Do not wait too long. Do not wait until your heart becomes hard and insensitive to the convictions of God's Spirit. God's warning is clear and it is directed to the entire human race: Do not wait until it is too late.

Gen 6:3 *Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever."*

Rom 2:5-9 *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

Heb 3:12-13 *See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

Prov 29:1 *A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed — without remedy.*

Prov 28:14 *Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.*

2. Those invited to seek the LORD are the wicked of the earth (v. 7). No matter how much wickedness people commit, the LORD still reaches out to them, encouraging them to seek Him. What is involved in seeking? Repentance. Simply and plainly, repentance means to forsake an evil way of life to turn to the LORD. People who truly repent turn away from their wicked behaviour, banish evil thoughts from their minds, and turn to the LORD. They believe Him and obey His commandments. When people truly repent, the LORD has mercy upon them and forgives their sins. They are freely, abundantly pardoned.

Eph 1:17 *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

Titus 3:4-7 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved*

us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

3. The need to seek the LORD is urgent, for God's thoughts and ways are far beyond our comprehension (vv. 8-9). God is holy and dwells in perfection, and no one could ever come close to understanding His ways. Why would God create the world and then allow sin to cause so much devastation and the death of every human being? The answers to this question and so many more are partially revealed in Scripture, but only partially. God's thoughts and ways are perfect and righteous, far beyond our understanding. On the other hand our thoughts and ways are blemished, imperfect, wicked and simplistic. Therefore, we must never try to "second-guess" God (Warren W. Wiersbe. *Be Comforted*, p. 147). Although many people try to diminish God's image into nothing more than a superman, a person whose thoughts and ways are only a *little above* man's, nothing could be further from the truth. God's thoughts and ways are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth. Imagine the incomprehensible distance between the highest star in existence and the earth. God's thoughts and ways exceed man's by a far greater distance than even that because He created the highest star. God clearly does not think or act like we do. Although Scripture does not give us complete answers to all questions, it does give us enough information to enable us to trust God and to know right from wrong. Through the truths revealed in Scripture, we can know much about God, and we can have assurance that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. Therefore, when God extends to people the invitation to seek Him, people must seek Him. The LORD knows that the issue involves life and death, eternity in heaven or eternity in hell. But it is up to every individual to accept or reject Him.

Rom 11:32-36 *For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Rev 15:3 *And sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of ages."*

4. What will stir the wicked to repent of their sins and return to the LORD for salvation? God's Word (vv. 10-11). God's Holy Word is the point of contact between Him and

the people of earth. Without the Word of God, people would have no way to know the LORD. If the Holy Bible did not exist, the LORD would have to personally appear or verbally speak out in order to communicate with people. But by giving us the Holy Bible, the LORD has given us continued access to what He wishes to teach us. It is the Word of God that convicts the wicked of their sins and stirs them to repent. It is the Word of God that tells people to cleanse their minds of evil thoughts and correct their wicked behaviour. Note what Scripture says: God's Word is as powerful as the rain and snow that water the earth and causes the seed to grow (v. 10). God's Word will not return to Him empty. His Word will bear fruit, will accomplish His purpose. It will convict sinners, lead them to Christ, and instruct them in the way of righteousness.

Mat 24:35 *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

Heb 4:12 *For the word of God is living active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

1 Pet 1:25 *But the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.*

1 Pet 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

2 Pet 1:19-21 *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Psa 119:9, 11 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word....I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

Psa 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

Psa. 119:130 *The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

5. The results of seeking the LORD show what great things God does for His people. When God set His people free from the Babylonian captivity, He made three wonderful promises to them, promises that are applicable to believers of all generations (vv. 12-13).
- a. The people who were set free — repentant sinners — would live in joy and peace (v. 12). Their new life would begin as soon as they were released from their captivity, and it would continue on throughout their lives. A sense of fullness — inner joy and inner peace — would continually flood the hearts of faithful, obedient believers.

John 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

John. 15:11 *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*

John 16:24 *“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”*

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

John 17:3 *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Phil 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 1:6-9 *In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

Psa 29:11 *The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.*

Psa 119:165 *Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.*

Isa 12:3 *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

Isa 48:18 *If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*

- b. The repentant sinners were also given the wonderful promise of a great future, a time when the earth would be transformed, made perfect (vv. 12-13a). This is a clear prophecy of the Messianic kingdom, the kingdom that Christ will establish on earth when He returns. In that day all nature will rejoice, for the creation will be delivered from its corruption, its struggle and its suffering (see notes, Rom 8:18-27). All thorns will be removed from the earth and all vegetation will become fruitful, producing its maximum capacity. There will be a new earth, as well as a new heaven.

2 Pet 2:10-13 *This is especially true of those [the wicked] who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings, yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their pleasures while they feast with you.*

Rev 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

Rev 22:3-5 *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city [New Jerusalem], and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

Isa 65:17 *“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”*

Isa 66:22 *“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.”*

- c. The transformation of the universe will be for the purpose of honouring the LORD (v. 13). It will be a sign of God's wonderful love for His people and of His great power that works for the good of His people.

Rom 15:5-6 *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus. So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rev 19:7 *Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.*

Psa 29:2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.

Psa 34:3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exult his name together.

Psa 57:5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

Psa 107:32 Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.

Isa 25:1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvellous things, things planned long ago.

III. 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. ■*