
ISAIAH 56: 1 Thus says the LORD, "Keep justice, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

Whoever would partake of the blessings of the Gospel is required to be holy in all manner of life and conversation. And he that will be so is declared to be accepted according to this gracious dispensation, the blessings of which are large as the human race, without any respect to persons or to nations, Isa 56:1-8. At the ninth verse begins a different subject, or new section of prophecy. It opens with calling on the enemies of the Jews, (the Chaldeans, or perhaps the Romans), as beasts of prey against them, for the sins of their rulers, teachers, and other profane people among them, whose guilt drew down judgments on the nation, Isa 56:9-12.

ISAIAH 56: 2 Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast; who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

Verse 2

That keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it - Kimchi has an excellent note here. "The Sabbath is sanctified when it is distinguished in dignity; and separated from other days.

1. As to the body, in meat, drink, and clean clothing.
2. As to the soul, that it be empty of worldly occupations, and be busily employed in the words of the law and wisdom, and in meditation on the works of the Lord."

The rabbins say, "Jerusalem had never been destroyed, had not the Sabbaths been profaned in it."

ISAIAH 56: 3 Neither let the foreigner, who has joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; neither let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

ISAIAH 56: 4 For thus says the LORD, "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant:

ISAIAH 56: 5 to them I will give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

Verse 5

I will give them an everlasting name - For לל lo, him, in the singular, it is evident that we ought to read למו lamo, them, in the plural: so read the Septuagint, Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate.

ISAIAH 56: 6 Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, and to love the LORD's name, to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath from profaning it, and holds fast my covenant;

 Verse 6

The sons of the stranger - The Gentiles.

That join themselves to the Lord - Who shall enter into the Christian covenant by baptism and faith in Christ, as the Jews and proselytes did by circumcision.

To serve him - To live according to the Gospel, and ever do that which is right in the sight of the Lord.

To love the name of the Lord - The name of Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of sinners, the Anointed of God, and the Giver of the Holy Spirit to his followers.

To be his servants - To worship no other God but Jehovah, and to trust in none for salvation but his Christ.

That keepeth the Sabbath - That observes it as a type of the rest that remains for the people of God.

And taketh hold of my covenant - בבריתי biberithi, "of my covenant sacrifice;" as without this he can do nothing good; and without it nothing can be acceptable to the infinite majesty of the Most High.

ISAIAH 56: 7 even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

 Verse 7

Shall be accepted - A word is here lost out of the text: it is supplied from the Septuagint, ἔσονται, "they shall be." - Houbigant.

ISAIAH 56: 8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, "Yet will I gather others to him, besides his own who are gathered."

ISAIAH 56: 9 All you animals of the field, come to devour, all you animals in the forest.

 Verse 9

All ye beasts of the field - Here manifestly begins a new section. The prophet in the foregoing chapters, having comforted the faithful Jews with many great promises of God's favor to be extended to them, in the restoration of their ruined state, and in the enlargement of his Church by the admission of the Gentiles; here on a sudden makes a transition to the more disagreeable part of the prospect, and to a sharp reproof of the wicked and unbelievers; and especially of the negligent and faithless governors and teachers, of the idolaters and hypocrites, who would still draw down his judgments upon the nation. Probably having in view the destruction of their city and polity by the Chaldeans, and perhaps by the Romans. The same subject is continued in the next chapter; in which the charge of corruption and apostasy becomes more general against the whole Jewish Church.

Some expositors have made great difficulties in the 9th verse of this chapter, where there seems to be none. It is perfectly well explained by Jeremiah, Jer 12:7, Jer 12:9, where, having introduced God declaring his purpose of punishing his people, by giving them up as a prey to their enemies the Chaldeans, a charge to these his agents is given in words very nearly the same with those of Isaiah in this place: - "I have forsaken my house; I have deserted my heritage;

I have given up the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies. -

Come away, be gathered together, all ye beasts of the field;

Come away to devour."

All ye beasts in the forest "All ye beasts of the forest" - Instead of ביער baiyaar, three MSS. have יער yaar, without the preposition; which seems to be right, and is confirmed by all the ancient Versions.

ISAIAH 56: 10 His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they can't bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.

Verse 10

His watchmen are blind - Kimchi observes, "The flock is intrusted to the care of these watchmen. The wild beasts come; these dogs bark not; and the wild beasts devour the flock. Thus they do not profit the flock. Yea, they injure it; for the owner trusts in them, that they will watch and be faithful; but they are not. These are the false teachers and careless shepherds."

Dumb dogs, they cannot bark - See note on Isa 62:6.

Sleeping "Dreamers" - חזים hozim, ετυπυαζομενοι, Septuagint. This seems to be the best authority for the meaning of this word, which occurs only in this place: but it is to be observed, that eleven MSS. of Kennicott's and De Rossi's, and four editions, have חזים chazim, seers, or those who see; and so the Vulgate seems to have read, videntes vana, "seeing vain things."

Loving to slumber - לנום lanum: but six of Kennicott's and seven of De Rossi's MSS. read לנוס lanus, to fly, "to change their residence:" but what connection such reading can have with the sense of the passage, I cannot discern. What is taken for O samech here is, I have no doubt, a narrow formed final ם mem, which has been mistaken for the above. Many instances occur in my own MSS., where the final ם mem is similar to the samech; and yet no such change was intended by the scribe.

ISAIAH 56: 11 Yes, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds who can't understand: they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter.

Verse 11

Greedy dogs - Insatiably feeding themselves with the fat, and clothing themselves with the wool, while the flock is scattered, ravaged, and starved! O what an abundance of these dumb and greedy dogs are there found hanging on and prowling about the flock of Christ! How can any careless, avaricious, hireling minister read this without agitation and dismay?

ISAIAH 56: 12 "Come," say they, "I will get wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, great beyond measure."

Verse 12

I will fetch wine "Let us provide wine" - For $\eta\eta\kappa\alpha$ ekchah, first person singular, an ancient MS. has $\eta\eta\kappa\alpha$ nikchah, first person plural; and another ancient MS. has $\kappa\alpha$ ak upon a rasure. So the Syriac, Chaldee, and Vulgate render it. The spirit of this Epicurean sentiment is this: Let us indulge ourselves in the present time to the utmost, and instead of any gloomy forebodings of the future, let us expect nothing but increasing hilarity for every day we shall live. Thus they, "Counting on long years of pleasure here,

Are quite unfurnished for the world to come."