

## ***Isaiah Part 42: “Shall a [nation] be born in one day?”***

### **Isaiah 66**

#### ***The humble and contrite in spirit (Isaiah 66 v 1 to 14)***

“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” (v 1) – the LORD puts things back into perspective. We can never gain much wisdom until we understand that God is enthroned in Heaven, and that the earth is under his command. Stephen quoted verses 1 and 2 in Acts 49 v 47 to 50, arguing that ‘the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands’, for he is the Creator of Heaven and earth.

- When God looks down upon the worship of the people of Israel, what does he see (v 1 to 4)? What does he value? See Psalm 51 v 17; John 4 v 23, 24.

“What is the house that you would build for me...? But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” (v 1, 2) – we may want to serve God, and to build something for him, but serve him *our* way; but what God really wants is a ‘humble and contrite’ spirit.

“He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man” (v 3) – in the empty religious ritualism, God’s people thought they were pleasing God. But the LORD says that when a man slaughters an ox in sacrifice, it is as if he takes a man’s life. Their religious ritualism added to their sin, rather than take it away. “These have chosen their own ways... I also will choose harsh treatment for them” (v 3, 4) – God’s people chose to rebel against him, so in judgment, God will choose “harsh treatment... and bring their fears upon them.” Why? “Because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes.”

“Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy’; but it is they who shall be put to shame” (v 5) – here Isaiah shows how those with a shallow, empty religion mock those of genuine faith: (i) empty religion hates genuine faith (“hate you”); (ii) empty religion rejects true faith (“cast you out”); (iii) empty religion acts in the name of the LORD (“for my name’s sake”); (iv) empty religion mocks with spiritual sounding words (“Let the LORD be glorified...”). But empty religion will never ultimately triumph. At the end of days, if not before, they “shall be put to shame”, when they hear the voice of the LORD, who fully repays his enemies (v 6).

“Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?” (v 8 – the website ‘One for Israel’ posted this article, as part of Israel’s Independence Day celebrations:

*The British began to remove their troops towards the end of April 1948. On 14 May 1948 David Ben-Gurion, the chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, announced the formation of the new state of Israel. He said, “The Nazi Holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, proved anew the urgency of the reestablishment of the Jewish State, which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish people to equality in the family of nations.” Ben Gurion saw the horrors of the Holocaust as paving the way to the birth of a Jewish State, and he was not alone in making such a suggestion. Would the miracle of the recreation of Israel ever have happened without such an atrocity on a scale that we can still barely comprehend? These questions are impossible for earth-bound humanity to answer, but again, we see the closely bound bitter and sweet, almost too close for comfort...*

*The Amplified Bible notes about this verse give this comment: “Never in the history of the world had such a thing happened before—but God keeps his word. As definitely foretold here and in Ezekiel 37 v 21, 22, Israel became a recognized nation, actually “born in one day”...*

***[MORE OVER...]***

“Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream” (v 12) – when the Messiah returns in glory, the peace of Jerusalem will be like a gentle, powerful river. But not only Jerusalem: the ‘glory of the nations’ will be like an overflowing stream. “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you” (v 13) – God speaks with supreme tenderness to his faithful servants: no one can comfort like a mother, and God will bring that kind of comfort to his people.

### ***Final judgment and glory of the LORD (Isaiah 66 v 15 to 24)***

- What is the fate of those who, having heard God’s voice, do not listen, but rebel (see v 4 to 6, 17, 24)? By contrast, what is promised to Zion and her children? See v 7 to 14, 20 to 22.

“The time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory” (v 18) – God has promised a great regathering work among Israel; but he will also do a regathering work among the whole world, from ‘all nations and tongues’ to see his glory. One place this finds ultimate fulfillment is around the throne of God (Revelation 5 v 9, 10). God says that he will “set a sign among” the nations (v 19): this may be ‘the sign of the Son of Man’ (Matthew 24 v 29 to 31).

“From them I will send survivors to the nations... to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory” (v 19) – Isaiah makes prophetic reference to the missionary calling of God’s people. God had a missionary intent for Israel, that they would be a priesthood among the nations (Exodus 19 v 6), and a light to the Gentiles. In the ‘Great Commission’ Jesus commands his followers to go and make disciples all the nations (Matthew 28 v 18 to 20). An American theologian Bultema wrote: ‘They are sent to *Tarshish* (Spain, France and Italy) to *Pul* (a region in Africa) and to *Lud*, which according to some is the same as Libya, though it seems preferable to take *Pul* and *Lud* together for all of Africa. Tubal was a son of Japheth, whose descendants settled in north-eastern Europe or Russia and *Javan* is the biblical name for Greece.’ Also, there will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 7 v 3, 4).

“They shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD... to my holy mountain Jerusalem” (v 20) – as the missionaries go out, the people of Israel ultimately come back, in a magnificent regathering. This is partially fulfilled now in Israel’s regathered state, but will ultimately be fulfilled in the millennial earth of the Messiah. “And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites” (v 21) – in that day God will extend the priesthood beyond its previous boundaries. This is also fulfilled in the Church, because saints are called ‘priests’ (1 Peter 2 v 9; Revelation 1 v 6; 5 v 10; 20 v 6).

“All flesh shall come to worship before me” (v 23) – here the LORD declares his ultimate triumph. Throughout the book of Isaiah, the nations have been judged and often condemned (v 24), but God has a plan to reach the nations (Revelation 5 v 9, 10). “From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath” – Isaiah began his prophecy with condemnation of the shallow worship of God’s people at the time of the ‘new moons and sabbaths’ (Isaiah 1 v 12 to 15); but now, after God’s ultimate triumph, all this is changed...

*Prayer –*

*Lord, we stand in awe of your holy Word, and we praise you for the amazing truths and promises revealed to us through the prophet Isaiah. Help us to remember that the one to whom you will look is the one who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at your Word.*

*Help us to rejoice and be glad, as we look towards the new Jerusalem, and to a new heaven and a new earth, as we remember your ultimate promise given in Revelation 21 v 3, 4: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

*Amen*