

Isaiah Lesson 18 Articles

Of course, the remarkable thing will be the “birth of a nation” as Israel takes center stage on the international scene (vv. 7–9). The return of the Jews to their land will be as swift as the birth of a baby. Israel’s “travail” will be “the Day of the Lord” or “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), when God will purify His people and prepare them for the coming of their Messiah. Political Israel was born on May 14, 1948; but “the new Israel” will be “born in a day” when they believe on Jesus Christ. Jerusalem will experience joy, peace, and satisfaction (Isa. 66:10–14). Like a nursing baby, she will find health and peace in the arms of the Lord. “Peace like a river” reminds us of Isaiah’s words to Ahaz (8:5–8) and God’s promises in 41:18 and 48:18.

There will be a new temple (66:1–6; Ezek. 40–48), but the ceremonies of worship can never take the place of a humble heart. God does not live in buildings; He dwells with those who submit to Him. Stephen quoted Isaiah 66:1–2 in his defense before the Jews (Acts 7:48–50), and Paul referred to these words in his address to the Athenian philosophers (17:24).

In Isaiah’s day, were God’s people trembling at His Word? No, they were not. Instead, they were going through the motions of worship without having a heart for God. The people were not *sacrificing* the animals; they were *murdering* them! Because their hearts were far from God (Isa. 29:13), their offerings were as unclean things to the Lord. It is the heart of the worshiper that determines the value of the offering.

God’s hand will bring blessing to His servants but “indignation toward His enemies” (66:14); and Isaiah describes that “indignation” in verses 15–18. The Day of the Lord will be a storm of judgment with fire and whirlwinds, and with the sword of God; “And those slain by the Lord shall be many.”

Who will be slain? Those who have disobeyed God’s Law in their eating and their worshiping (vv. 17–18). Instead of worshiping the true and living God, they turned to pagan idols and pagan practices. It is not enough to be “religious”; we must serve Him according to what He says in His Word (8:20).

The book closes with a description of messengers going to the ends of the earth to announce what God has done for Israel (66:19). The result will be a flow of people to Jerusalem (see 60:3–14 and 66:12) to bring offerings to the Lord. In the past, Gentile nations came to Jerusalem to attack and destroy; but in the Kingdom Age, they will come to worship and glorify God.

The book ends on a seeming negative note describing worshipers looking at the desecrated and decayed corpses of the rebels (v. 24). The Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew, *ge hinnom* = Gehenna in the Greek) is a picture of judgment (30:33); Jesus used it to picture hell (Mark 9:43–48). The people who come to Jerusalem to worship will also go outside the city to this “garbage dump” and be reminded that God is a consuming fire (Jer. 7:32).¹

Yet the birthpangs of judgment can bring forth joy. The Lord says a day will come when all people who have responded to Him will live in fellowship with each other and with their God:

I will extend peace to her like a river.... As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.

Isaiah 66:12–13

Those two ways, to judgment and to hope, remain open today. And what lies at the end of each is known.

“As the new heavens and the new earth that I will make will endure before Me,” declares the Lord, “so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before Me,” says the Lord. “And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against Me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.”

Isaiah 66:22–24

The place to which each pathway leads is sure. The choice remains ours.²

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 162–164). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher’s commentary* (p. 400). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.