

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH – CHAPTERS SIXTY-TWO TO SIXTY-SIXTY

Isaiah continues to spell out the barriers to the cross being effective in our lives.

FAITH NEEDS TO BE WHOLEHEARTED

The faithful will often seem to have been ignored by those who have chosen instead to be children of the spiritual ‘adultery’ which involves looking to other gods.(Matt.16:4) It is hard times which cause us to stop and ask how it would have been different if we had trusted in all the Lord promised rather than in ourselves.(57:1-13) There is a simple choice, wherever in the world we come from,(Acts 2:39; Eph.2:17) to have a proud heart and face the anger of God, or a humble heart which acknowledges our sin,(Heb.13:5) and enjoys His peace regardless of the storms around us.(57:14-21)

FAITH NEEDS TO BE WORKED OUT IN PRACTICE

Apart from those who obviously follow other gods and face God’s wrath, there are also those who wonder why God is not answering their prayers when they seem to have done all the right religious things by way of fasting,(Matt.6:16-18; Lk.18:12) and observance of special days to impress others. Real worship of God includes treating those who work for us fairly,(Jas.5:4) It means freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, and giving shelter and clothes to the needy.(Matt.25:35,36; Heb.13:2; Lk.3:11) It cannot be all talk and no action.(Tit.1:16) When we face our hypocrisy with humble hearts we will again enjoy His presence,(Jas.4:8) the light of God will be switched on in our lives,(Matt.5:14) we will be conscious of His guidance and strength,(Phil.4:13) our inner thirst will be satisfied and we will have so much to offer to those around us.(Jn.4:14; 7:37,38) Our families and communities will be rebuilt. The Sabbath will be about relaxing in Him.(58)

FAITH NEEDS TO COME FROM THE HEART

In the next chapter,(59) Isaiah takes one more opportunity to spell out the nature of sin and rebellion against God, which stands in the way of us enjoying the love of the Saviour on which he will focus for the rest of the book. Our sin makes God deaf to our prayer. We have cut ourselves off from Him by our violence, lies, dishonesty, poisonous talk against others and injustice.(Rom.3:15-17; Mk.7:21,22) We wonder why we struggle along in life as if in the dark as we deny God by our lives.(Matt.10:33) God looked for someone to intercede for His people but there was no-one. The only solution was for Him to do it Himself, by coming into the world to be our Redeemer,(Rom.11:26,27) as if He was a knight in armour,(Eph.6:14-17; I Thess.5:8) who could deal with our enemy and set us free. To those He sets free He promises to give His Spirit to indwell us for ever and His words to say.(Matt.10:19,20)

AT LAST – THE HEAVENLY WEDDING!

When we do finally commit to Him to be faithful for eternity, like a bride to a bridegroom, the stage will be set for the greatest celebration in all history. The bride is variously pictured in the New Testament as being a new city of Jerusalem, and the resurrected body of all true believers, the Christian church.(Gal.4:26; Eph.5:22-33; Rev.21:2) Chapter 60 foreshadows the vision given to John in Rev.21. The whole world beginning with the leaders of nations will be drawn by the light of Christ through us.(60:3,10; Rev.21:24) This began when the wise men came with gifts to honour the new born King.(60:3; Matt.2:11) The gates will always be open because God’s love is open to all and there will no longer be any threat from the Devil.(60:11; Rev.21:25, 26) Even God’s enemies will have to admit that He is God.(60:14; Rev.3:9; Heb.12:22, 23) The Bridegroom, the Redeemer Himself, will live there.(60:14-16; Rev.21:3) There will be no place

in her for sin.(60:18; Rev.21:27) There will be no sun, moon or darkness because the Lord will be the Light of His people.(60:20; Rev.21:23) The heavenly city would have no temple building because we would be His temple.(Rev.21:22)

NOW, WHERE IS THE BRIDEGROOM?

Chapter 61 opens with words which introduced one of the most dramatic moments in the whole New Testament. Jesus of Nazareth was given the opportunity to read the scriptures in His home synagogue. To the amazement of the crowd who knew Him so well as the carpenter He read 61:1,2 as they had never heard these familiar words read before,(Lk.4:18,19) and immediately applied them to Himself. He was unmistakably claiming that the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Bridegroom of the book of Isaiah had finally arrived. He had come to tell them good news which would set them free from the pain and prison of their circumstances. They would become His means of establishing His kingdom like solid oaks or a strong city.(61:3,4) They would all become His priests to bring men and women to know Him.(I Pet.2:9; Rev.1:6) They would be His sons, enjoying the wonderful sufficiency of heirs of God.(61:6-9) And so both the bridegroom and the bride would be prepared for the wedding. Both would demonstrate in every sense the character of God. The world would not be able to deny what they saw.(61:10,11) But our lives today should already be giving a glimpse of this extraordinary day in the future.

Q.1 What important New Testament event does chapter 62 anticipate?(Matt.21:5) How does this chapter continue the theme of chapter 54? Who is the bridegroom and who is the bride? What will be the outcome of them coming together – for Israel? – and for us?(62)

Q.2 If the Lord arrived in Jerusalem as the King and found His people rebelling against Him how would He respond? Whose blood would be shed?(63:1-6) How are we to respond to His kindness and compassion? But in reality what instead do we so often do? What causes us to turn back to Him again, and with what result?(63:7-14) So what is the ongoing struggle between the Bridegroom and the bride-to-be?(63:15-19)

Q.3 What do we think God would have to do to get our attention? What in reality is the barrier to us recognising Him? How does Paul use the image of the Potter and the clay to explain God's work in our lives and our responsibility to Him?(Rom.9:19-23) How does this image help us in times of adversity?(64)

Q.4 How does Isaiah describe the attitudes of those who reject Him?(65:1-7) How then does he contrast those who seek Him and those who do not?(65:8-16) What can those who trust God expect from Him? Put the message of this chapter into today's world.(65)

Q.5 If God is not looking for buildings to live in, what does He really seek?(66:1-6) How do 66:7-17 relate to the wedding of Christ and His church? How finally does Isaiah apply the image of the wedding to the world?(66:18-24)