

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 55

*Theme: Invitation to the world; the ways of God;
institution of the Word of God*

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Chapter 55

THEME: Invitation to the world; the ways of God; institution of the Word of God.

The work of the suffering Servant in chapter 53 makes possible the offer of salvation in this chapter. In chapter 54 the invitation was confined to Israel. In this chapter the invitation is extended to the entire world. The gospel went first to Israel and then to the Gentiles. I think this is what Paul meant when he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). This does not mean that the Jew has top priority today, but he shouldn't have bottom priority either; he is on the same par as everyone else. The Jew did receive the gospel first. Peter on the day of Pentecost preached to an all-Jewish congregation -- there wasn't a Gentile in the lot. Now this invitation goes out to the world. This is remarkable because there have been very few religious leaders who have had a global view. The work of the suffering Servant in chapter 53 makes possible now the offer of salvation to a lost world.

God's invitation has yet to find its complete fulfillment in Israel. Today it is worldwide, with only one condition, as we shall see. This is not a mechanical offer locked in the airtight compartment of God's election, but it rests upon the free-flowing will of each hearer. He is urged -- in fact, he is commanded -- to seek the Lord.¹

In chapter 54, God was telling the Jews about the future He had planned for them. In spite of the fact that they'd incurred His wrath because of their rebellion, He had only reassurance for them. In the future, they will grow in population and territory, and God Himself will teach their sons. They will never need to fear their enemies again.

Now, as chapter 55 begins, we are reminded that while God does have a plan for the nation of Israel as a whole, it is up to each individual to accept His invitation...²

Spiritual thirst is primarily in view (see Ps 42:1–2; 63:1; Isa 41:17; 44:3). In hard times even water had to be purchased (see La 5:4), but here the water (a symbol of spiritual refreshment) — as well as the “wine” and “milk” (symbols of abundance, enjoyment and nourishment) — were free: The death of the servant (Isa 53:5–9) would pay for the free gift of life (see Ro 6:23).

An invitation to redemption. This passage differs from many earlier Deutero-Isaianic speeches because of its general nature. It contains few references to the exile or the trek through the desert to Judah, instead couching its description of the upcoming redemption in broad terms that are less anchored in a specific historical situation. The further one reads in chs 40-66, the more one finds a tendency away from concrete language that reflects the situation of the Babylonian exiles and toward phrasing that could apply to any historical era. Also noteworthy is the plea that people abandon sinful behavior, which is absent in the first division of Deutero-Isaiah's work (chs 40-48) but increasingly common in the second and third divisions (chs 49-57, 58-66).³

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

³ Jewish Study Bible Notes

¹Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

“Thirsteth” - John 7:37, 4:14; Rev 22:17. “Come...come” - we must follow - mode available by His death.⁴

[Ho, every one that thirsteth ... he that hath no money] Two classes invited by God:

1. Everyone that is thirsty.
2. He that has no money.

[come ye to the waters,] Four "come's" to the thirsty and poor:

1. Come to the waters (Isa. 54:1).
2. Come, buy, and eat.
3. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
4. Come unto Me (Isa. 54:3).

The waters, wine, milk, bread, and other benefits here must be understood as pertaining to spiritual things instead of natural and material, for they are the only things that can be bought without money. Furthermore, the invitation is from God who is not in the business of selling material things; but He does have the blessings pictured figuratively by these terms. The cry of the first verse is a common one in the East where water, wine, and milk are sold.⁵

The chapter opens with the heart cry of God to every one to pause and consider His salvation. "Ho" is like a startled cry for help in the night. He wants every weak soul to behold His mighty bared arm of salvation.

The invitation is ecumenical. I don't believe in the ecumenical movement that men talk about today, but I do believe in God's ecumenical movement, which is that the invitation of the gospel is to go out to the world. However, it is limited to one class: "Ho, every one that thirsteth." This invitation is to every man, woman, and child on the topside of the earth. It means every man of every station in life, in all strata of society, from every race, tribe, tongue, condition, and color. All are included. The invitation is "Ho, every one."

But notice that it is limited to only certain ones -- "every one that thirsteth." It is for those whose thirst has not been slaked by the man-made cisterns and bars of this earth. The invitation is to drink deep and long of the eternal springs. Dr. F. C. Jennings has written: "Let us listen then, as if we had never heard the melody of this tender and gracious invitation before. Who are the guests here invited? All who thirst! All that is needed to be welcome then, is -- not to need (for that is true of all) -- but to want what is offered. Am I utterly dissatisfied with myself? I thirst! Am I dissatisfied with all the world can offer me, and of which I have tasted? I thirst! Is my spirit altogether dissatisfied with all the formalism of religion? Then do I thirst! Blessed thirst! It is the only prerequisite to enjoyment!" (Studies in Isaiah, p. 645).

This is the invitation: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth." If you say, "I am not interested. I am not thirsty. I am satisfied with the things of this life," then it is not for you, my friend. It is not for you until you are thirsty. Here in California you will be riding along in the desert and all of a sudden you will see on a billboard a picture of a bottle pushed down into some cracked ice. My, it looks good! There is only one word printed on the sign -- "THIRSTY?" The company that put up the sign hopes you are thirsty. They want you to stop at the next service station and buy a

⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

coke or whatever they are selling. If you have your thermos bottles filled with iced tea, or orange juice, you say, "I am not thirsty," and drive on. But if you are thirsty, you will pull off at the next service station and get your drink.

At the crossroads of life God has put up a sign: "THIRSTY?" Ho, every one that is thirsty. Are you tired of this world? Have you found that it does not satisfy? Do you long for something better? God says, "I have something for you." Then He mentions a variety of things and says that you can buy these things without money. A bottled drink used to cost a nickel, now you are to pay forty cents and by the time you read this, the price may have gone even higher. But God's offer is without money. Why? Because back in Isaiah 53 the Lord Jesus paid the price for it on the Cross. This is God's invitation to you, "Come ye, buy, and eat." Not only drink, but He offers the bread of life, too.

Notice that there are three types of drink offered:

1. "Waters" -- the plural form is used. In the Hebrew the plural expresses a superlative degree. This water is too wonderful to be expressed by the singular form. "Waters" also speaks of abundance, of quantity as well as quality. This is water for the soul. This is the kind of water that the Lord Jesus offered -- and He used the same symbolism -- when he stood in the temple area that day and cried, "...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Now we know where the fountain is -- that fountain is Christ, who is the Water of Life and our Savior.

2. "Wine" is the second type of drink offered, which symbolizes joy. In Proverbs 31:6 we read, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." And 1Thessalonians 1:6 says, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (*italics mine*). Joy is what you have when Christ is not only your Savior but when He becomes the Master of your life. When you come to know Him, you have joy. In 1John 1:4 John says, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (*italics mine*). I saw this motto in a preacher's study in Salem, Oregon: "Joy is the flag that is flown in the heart when the Master is in residence." That is a marvelous drink that will put genuine joy in your heart!

3. "Milk" is the third type of drink offered. Milk is essential for growth and development, especially for babies. The dairy industry has been trying to tell people: "Every body needs milk." Well, the milk of the Word of God is essential for spiritual growth. Now, since I am a teacher of the Word of God, that makes me a milkman. I give out the milk of the Word. Peter said it like this, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1Pet. 2:2). Have you ever seen a little baby while his mama gets his bottle ready? That hungry little fellow, lying in his crib, is wiggling his feet, his hands; in fact, he is wiggling all over. With his mouth he is making all kinds of commotion and a great deal of noise! Why? Because he desires milk. And a child of God ought to want the milk of the Word of God with equal longing! My friend, if you are a believer, there is something wrong with you if you don't like to study the Word of God. The greatest problem in our churches today is that we are entertaining, we are giving nice little courses in this and that and the other thing, we are giving banquets and dinners, and we are putting folk on committees. We are doing everything but giving them the Word of God. Many church members are stillborn -- they have no spiritual life. My friend, if you are a believer, you ought to want the sincere milk of the Word of God.⁶

⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

1-2 In ch. 55 the Lord issues a general call to all who would call themselves by His name, to abandon the Babylons of this world and to find their satisfaction and their security in Him alone, and in that city of joy and peace that He will build. This passage is a call to revival for all who have wandered far from the Lord or from that grace which is the basis for our relationship with Him. It is also a call to salvation for any who have not known Him, promising a free but abundant and eternal life that is better than money can buy. The call is issued to the thirsty and the penniless—all who will recognize their need for spiritual blessing and their inability to meet the need themselves. “Waters” and “wine and milk” are symbols of abundant spiritual blessings.⁷

Ho! The prophet calls out, loud and clear, to all that can hear. This is an important announcement, and is therefore prefaced with this unique call.

"Ho! - this is the gospel note; a short, significant appeal, urging you to be wise enough to attend to your own interests. Oh, the condescension of God! That he should, as it were, become a beggar to his own creature, and stoop from the magnificence of his glory to cry, 'Ho!' to foolish and ungrateful men!" (Spurgeon)

Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters: It is an invitation to everyone - but everyone who thirsts. Only those who thirst will come to the waters. If we aren't thirsty for what the LORD can give us, then we will never come to His waters.

Jesus may have had this passage from Isaiah in mind when He cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. (John 7:37)

You who have no money, come, buy, and eat: Those who do thirst, and answer the LORD's invitation, don't need to bring money. Their money won't really do them any good. They can simply bring their trust and faith and receive what God has to give them.

Water ... wine ... milk: It's all free. It isn't that the entrance into the Christian life is free, and then we must be charged to advance in the Christian life. It's all free; our growth is just as much a gift of grace as our salvation.

"You are not permitted to drink freely of water, and then to purchase wine. You are not invited to come and eat freely that which is good, and then to spend your labor for that which is fat. No, the richest dainties of God's house are as free as the bread he gives to hungry souls."⁸ (Spurgeon)

The introductory particle (hoi) is mainly an attention getting device, but it expresses a slight tone of pity. The prophet is an evangelist with a concern for the souls of men and a realization of their desperate condition without the blessings that the servant has obtained.

After getting their attention, Isaiah, speaking as God and for God, called the thirsty to come and drink freely, and to the hungry to enjoy a free meal (cf. Prov. 9:5-6; Matt. 5:6; John 4:13-14; 6:32-35; Rev. 22:17). Water, that formerly represented the Holy Spirit (cf. 32:15; 44:3), was now available to the people because of the Servant's work. Jesus extended a similar invitation to those in His day to come to Him to receive this water (i.e., eternal life through the Spirit; John 4:10-14; 7:37-38). The Lord's offer was to buy what was free. The only way to do this is to use someone else's money to purchase it. It was the Servant's payment for sin that made salvation free for those who count His "money" good.

⁷ Believers Study Bible

⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

The abundance and freeness of the water of refreshment (44:3), the wine of joy (25:6-8) and the milk of richness ([nourishment] Ex. 3:8) and supremacy (60:16) is figurative of the Lord's salvation with the Servant at its centre (see verses 3-5).⁹

God calls out for everyone to hear: If you're thirsty and need a drink; If you're hungry but have no money, come to Him. He offers His blessings for free. This is obviously reminiscent of Jesus' call to the people on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when He cried out,

John 7:37-38 ...“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”

The person who desires to answer God's invitation would be one that could say as the Psalmist did,

Psa. 42:1-2 As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God...

And after an offer of free blessings, then the Lord asks why we waste our money on non-essentials and things that don't bring us any satisfaction.¹⁰

1-5: God's invitation. It is unclear whether these lines are addressed specifically to Judeans (which is implied by vv. 3-5, 12) or to any human being who wants to recognize the one God (so Ibn Ezra, Radak). 'Water,' understood by rabbinic commentators as a metaphor for Torah.¹¹

²Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

“Spend money” - “weigh silver” - Levitical overtone, silver = blood Cf. Zech 11:12; Ruth 4. Chapter 55 must follow Chapter 53, His death allows these things to be available!¹²

What Satisfies Man

Men are constantly spending money and selling their lives for things that aren't necessary or beneficial in daily life -- things that don't satisfy. The immortal mind of man can only be satisfied with the immortal God -- not with wealth, pleasure, greatness, and honor. No man, having lusted for these things, has ever been satisfied after receiving them to the full. They have proved to be vanity and vexation of spirit, pacifying for the moment, then leaving the heart with an aching void and a consciousness that man was made for higher and nobler things. Accepting the Spirit's invitation through the prophet will satisfy fully.

Ten Commands in Isaiah Chapter 55

1. Hearken diligently to Me (Isa. 55:2).
2. Eat that which is good.
3. Let your soul delight in fatness.
4. Incline your ear, come to Me (Isa. 55:3).
5. Hear, and your soul shall live.

⁹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

¹¹ Jewish Study Bible Notes

¹² Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

6. Seek the Lord while He may be found (Isa. 55:6).
7. Call upon Him while He is near.
8. Let the wicked forsake his way (Isa. 55:7).
9. Let the unrighteous forsake his thoughts.
10. Let him return to the Lord.¹³

Many folk, even Christians today, are spending money for so-called Christian enterprises that don't feed anybody. I hear some people today calling money bread -- I rather like that expression. The Word of God is "bread" also. A lot of Christians put their money into that which is not bread, although they think it is. It would be well to investigate where you give your money. It may be that you are buying a load of sawdust, which won't satisfy your heart and life.

The question is asked, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" The pleasures of this world are expensive. You have to pay for them. Not only are they expensive, but they never satisfy. They are counterfeit. They are sawdust and cannot satisfy the soul. Then where is happiness? You won't find it in money. Jay Gould, an American millionaire, had plenty of that. When he was dying, he said: "I suppose that I am the most miserable devil on earth." You won't find happiness in pleasure either. Lord Byron had fame, genius, money, and lived a life of pleasure, yet he wrote in his poem "On My Thirty-sixth Year": "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Why don't you come to the table where you can get some water, wine, milk, and bread that satisfies? That's where we all need to be today.¹⁴

Food costs money, lasts only a short time, and meets only physical needs. But God offers us free nourishment that feeds our soul. How do we get it? We are to come (55:1), listen (55:2), seek, and call on God (55:6). God's salvation is freely offered, but to nourish our souls we must eagerly receive it. We will starve spiritually without this food as surely as we will starve physically without our daily bread.¹⁵

God invites people in need to come (this word occurs four times in v. 1) to Him. By coming they indicate that they are trusting in and relying on Him for salvation and are agreeing to obey His commandments. The blessings God gives them are available without cost. Salvation is a free gift of God, whether it refers to spiritual redemption or physical deliverance. Probably both are intended here. The Lord asked the people how they could be interested in other things besides Himself as He is the only One who can bring genuine satisfaction. Throughout all history people have tried to find satisfaction through many things other than God.¹⁶

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? In His invitation, God asks His people to ask themselves - "Why do I spend money for what can't satisfy?" This is a remarkably relevant question, in light of all the things we can pour our time and money and effort into - things which will never satisfy they way the LORD can satisfy.

¹³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁵ Life Application Study Bible.

¹⁶ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance: The invitation is clear. The offer is made, the provision is made, and everything is available - but we must still do some things.

First, we must listen diligently. The satisfaction God promises doesn't come to those who don't listen, and listen diligently. It takes time, attention, and effort to listen diligently, and some aren't willing to do this.

Second, we must eat what is good. This requires some discernment. We must choose what is good, and then eat that. Many just simply eat whatever spiritual meal is set before them, without taking care to see that it is good.

Third, we must let your soul delight itself in abundance. Even when we listen, even when we eat what is good, we still must let our soul delight itself in abundance. You can sit down at a great spiritual meal, but by your stubborn or bad attitude, simply not let your soul delight itself in abundance.¹⁷

It is ridiculous to spend one's hard-earned money for what does not satisfy, yet that is what multitudes of people do when they pursue things of only temporal value. The Lord urged the hearers to listen carefully to Him. They should choose what was satisfying and what would yield true abundance (cf. Matt. 6:19-21). People can either work for nothing or receive for nothing (cf. Rom. 6:23).¹⁸

³Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David.

Cf. Acts 13:34; Isa 24:5.

“Everlasting covenant” - new covenant. Cf. Heb 9:15; Hos 2:18-20; Isa 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 56:4,6; 59:21; 61:8; Jer 31:31-33; 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60-62; 34:25; 37:26-28.

“Mercies of David” - promises that Messiah from his seed, sit on His throne, and set up an everlasting Kingdom (Ps 89:2-5; 19:37). Triumph over death and sheol (Ps 16:9,10). Peace and happiness to Israel (Ps 132:15-18).¹⁹

[your soul shall live] One who refused to accept the invitation of Isa. 55:1 and obey the ten commands of Isa. 55:2-7 (note c, Isa. 55:2) will lose his soul and die -- not live eternally.

[I will make an everlasting covenant with you] God has repeatedly spoken to the Jews about making an everlasting covenant with them (Isa. 42:6; 49:8; Jer. 31:31). This could not be the Mosaic covenant or any of the others already made with them; so it must refer to the new covenant to be made when the Messiah would come (Isa. 42:6; 49:8; Mt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6).

[sure mercies of David] The sure mercies of David (Isa. 55:3; 2Chr. 6:42) refer to the gracious promises and lovingkindnesses assured David in the Davidic covenant (2Sam. 7), and confirmed by an oath of God to him (Ps. 89:3-4,27,37; 132:11-18). This was partly fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ (Acts 13:34).

[David] The name David here refers to Israel's famous king, not the Messiah. When he is resurrected many scriptures will be literally fulfilled concerning David, in the same sense that the

¹⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

¹⁸ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

twelve apostles will be resurrected and given twelve thrones under the Messiah (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos. 3:5).²⁰

God was merciful to David, and He will be merciful to you and me today. I heard a man speaking in Pershing Square in Los Angeles one day, deriding and ridiculing the Bible. One Sunday evening I saw him in church when I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles. After the service he came to talk to me, feigning a humble approach, and said, "Pastor, I have a question to ask you. Why did God choose a man like David?" Then he leered at me, and I knew exactly what the old rascal was thinking. I said, "I'll tell you why God chose a man like David. It was so that you and I would have the courage to come to Him. If God would take David, He might take you, and he might take me!" The sure mercies of David -- how wonderful they are!²¹

God's covenant with David promised a permanent homeland for the Israelites, no threat from pagan nations, and no wars (2 Samuel 7:10, 11). But Israel did not fulfill its part of the covenant to obey God and stay away from idols. Even so, God was ready to renew his covenant again. He is a forgiving God!²²

By coming to the Lord people will have life and the benefits of God's everlasting covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:11b-16) in which the Lord promised that David's line would continue forever. Kindnesses renders the word *hesed* (here in the pl.), God's covenantal "loyal love," which relates to His loyal covenant with David (see *hesed*, "love," in 2 Sam. 7:15). Some interpreters say the "everlasting covenant" refers to the New Covenant (Jer. 32:40; Heb. 13:20). That is possible but the reference to David points to the Davidic Covenant, which also is said to last forever (2 Sam. 7:16). Just as God promised to keep His good hand on David, so He assured those who come to Him that He will never remove His good hand (His blessings) from them. He will always be with them and consider them His people.²³

The reference to the "sure mercies of David" speaks of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7), which promises that a descendant of David will rule eternally over a kingdom that will bless all the nations (cf. Luke 1:32, 33; 2:30-32). Verses 3-5 promise that all who respond to God's call will benefit from that covenant as members of the royal family, princes of the King. Furthermore, they will become witnesses to the nations of God's grace and power (v. 5; cf. Acts 1:8).²⁴

Incline your ear: The thought carries over from the idea of let your soul delight itself in abundance. Whoever will genuinely "feast" off of the Word must consciously incline their ear towards what God will say. This explains why two people can listen to the same message, and one benefit and the other not. Often, the one who did not benefit simply did not incline their ear to the LORD.

Hear, and your soul shall live: The benefit from inclining your ear to God is impressive. When we do it, we have life for our soul.

²⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²² Life Application Study Bible.

²³ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

²⁴ Believers Study Bible

And I will make an everlasting covenant with you - the sure mercies of David: For the one who will listen to the LORD, God promises a covenant. From Isaiah's perspective, this covenant is still in the future (I will make). The covenant is also characterized by the sure mercies of David.

God showed His great mercy to David; not only by sparing David's life when he was guilty of murder and adultery, but also in blessings and preserving and guiding David every day of his life. If God promises us the same mercy He showed to David, we are blessed indeed.

As well, the mercies of David are sure. They are certain. God never gave up on David, never stopped showing him mercy. We can count on God when He promises to us the sure mercies of David.²⁵

3-4: Sure Mercies of David: literally the faithful mercies of David. Quoted by the Apostle Paul in Acts 13:34 in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia and applied to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The whole context includes the idea that there is a new covenant and a renewal of soul for the one who receives the faithful mercies of David. Paul argues as Peter did that since David is dead and saw corruption that the promise could not have been to David. Verse 4 is addressed to the servant of God who is the main character in these pages since he was first introduced in chapter 7. He is the witness to the people, a leader and commander and he brings the sure mercies of David.²⁶

3-4 God promises that anyone who listens to and comes to Him will receive life - and a permanent contract with God. That contract, or covenant, will be for the same kind of faithful mercy that David received.

This is super-encouraging. Because David was far from the ideal believer. While he did have a heart for God, worshipped the Lord passionately, and operated in faith many times, he also had numerous failings.

He lost hope in God's promises after being pursued by King Saul. He convinced himself that life was always going to stink and that he should just escape into the land of the Philistines (1Sam 27:1).

He premeditatedly committed adultery (2Sam 11:2-4), and then had the woman's husband killed to cover up the resulting pregnancy (2Sam 11:14-15).

He had multiple wives and was a lousy, inattentive father. Overall, there are a lot of things to find wrong in David's life. But God still showed faithfulness and mercy to him. His promises to David never changed. His love for David never changed.

And the Lord is saying that when we listen to Him, when we come to Him, we find life and inherit that same everlasting covenant of faithfulness and mercy. How do we come to Him? Paul preached that we inherit these promises through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, Paul preached in Pisidian Antioch saying,

Acts 13:32-34 "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.'"²⁷

²⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

²⁶ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa54-59.htm>

²⁷ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

Again the Lord urged the hearers (everyone) to come to Him. He pressed them to listen to what He was saying, twice. God Himself is the feast. The result for them would be life, real life as opposed to the vain life described above (v. 2). Real life would involve living under an everlasting covenant that God would make with His people. This is probably a reference to the New Covenant, since the implication is that God would make it in the future (cf. 54:10).

While Jeremiah 31:31 says that Yahweh would make a new covenant "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," that covenant is the one under which all the people of God have lived since Jesus ratified it (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8-12). Its benefits are not all exclusively for Israel, though some of its benefits are exclusively for Israel and these benefits will only come into Israel's possession in the Millennium. Jesus terminated the Mosaic Covenant (Mark 7:19; Rom. 10:4; 14:14; Heb. 8:6—9:22; et al.) and ratified the New Covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25) with His blood when He died on the Cross.

However, this could be a reference to the Davidic Covenant, which is also eternal (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16).⁶⁶⁷ This new covenant would be in full harmony with God's promises to David, in the Davidic Covenant, regarding David's descendant who would rule over his house forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 Chron. 17:23-26; Ps. 89:35-38; cf. Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 13:34).²⁸

'The enduring loyalty promised to David:' In 2 Sam. 7.8-16 and Ps. 89.4, 20-37, God promised David that his descendants would rule Israel forever as an enduring royal dynasty. Here, Deutero-Isaiah extends that promise to the nation as a whole. The restored Judean commonwealth will have no one human king, for all its members will have royal status. Thus Deutero-Isaiah transforms the older Davidic covenant by democratizing it. (Cf. Deutero-Isaiah's democratizing of the priesthood in 61.5-6 and n.) The prophet also saves the Davidic promise by means of this transformation, for the more natural reading of the Davidic promise in 2 Sam. ch 7 and Ps. 89 proved incorrect in light of the fall of the Davidic dynasty to the Babylonians in 586 BCE. On Deutero-Isaiah's attitude toward the monarchy, see also 42.1-9; 60.1-22; 65.25.²⁹

An everlasting covenant. This term appears in 61:8; Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 37:26, referring to the experience of the returned exiles. steadfast, sure love for David. The blessing is focused on the house of David, out of which the messianic servant will arise (cited from the Septuagint in Acts 13:34).

⁴Behold, I have given him *for* a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

“Him” - Cf. Jer 30:9; Hos 3:5.

“Leader” - Nagid - Dan 9:25

Jesus is called the true witness for us in our day.

²⁸ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁹ Jewish Study Bible Notes

Four Things Messiah Will Be to Israel

1. Covenant maker (Isa. 55:3; 42:6; 49:8; Mt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6)
2. Witness (Isa. 55:4; Jn. 5:31-37; 8:18; Rev. 1:5)
3. Leader (Isa. 55:4). The Hebrew: *nagiyd* (HSN-<H5057>) means commander; one who occupies the front; a civil, military, and religious leader; captain; chief; governor; noble; prince; chief ruler
4. Commander (Isa. 55:4). The Hebrew: *tsavah* (HSN-<H6680>) means to constitute; enjoin; appoint; bid; give charge; command; set in order; send a messenger. Here it refers to the Messiah being the chief governor, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and having complete oversight and responsibility over all things on earth and over all His people.³⁰

I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and a commander for the people: God promises the blessing of good and wise leadership as a part of His sure mercies. God gave David and his remarkable leadership as a gift to Israel; here God promises that He will keep giving this gift according to the pattern shown in David.

David was a witness in the sense that he had a real relationship, a real experience with God, and could speak to Israel as a witness of what he had seen and heard in that relationship with God. Notice that David was a witness to the people. A witness to, not of the people. David did not lead through popularity polls or just giving the people what they wanted. He witnessed something from God, and he gave testimony of it to the people.

David was a leader for Israel, leading them spiritually, politically, and militarily. He led both by his godly example and his shepherd's heart. Notice that David was a leader and a commander for the people. Not a leader and a commander of the people, but for the people. He led with a shepherd's heart that genuinely desired God's best for the people.

It's curious that David is used here as God's prototype for a leader. Curious in many ways, because David's reign can be seen as quite troubled. He came to the throne of Israel through much struggle and difficulty. He slipped into terrible scandal, marked by murder and adultery. There was incest, rape, and murder among his own children. And his reign was marred by an ugly civil war, in which his own son almost deposed him. Yet David is here lifted up as a wonderful leader of God's people! This shows that David's heart after God meant more than outward success, comfort, and ease. It also shows that God's best and most effective don't necessarily have it easy.

David was a commander for Israel. Even with his tender shepherd's heart, his leadership was bold and out-front. Because he had a sense of the heart of God, being a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), he could boldly lead God's people.

These prophecies are fulfilled spiritually when God gives wonderful, David-like leadership to His people. They will be fulfilled ultimately when David - literal King David in his resurrection body - reigns over Israel in the millennium, the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ over this earth. Of that time, Jeremiah 30:9 says, But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. In Ezekiel 34:23-25 the LORD promises, I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them; My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's

³⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. We have indications that as God's people rule with Jesus over the millennial earth, people will be entrusted with geographical regions according to their faithfulness (Luke 19:12-19). It seems that David's glorious portion will be to rule over Israel.³¹

"Behold" introduces this verse and the next, and suggests comparison of them. The readers are not only to listen to what the Lord says but to look at what He presents. God is the speaker, but who is the "him" that is a witness to the nations and a leader and commander for the peoples? It could be David (v. 3), who witnessed to the character of Yahweh in his ministry. It could be Messiah, who would be a witness (light) to the nations and lead them. It is probably not Israel, since "him" is an unusual way of referring to Israel in this context. Nor is it the people of God more generally. I think the witness is the Servant Messiah, whom David anticipated and prefigured. Watts believed he was Darius.⁶⁶⁸ "The faithful mercies of David" (v. 3) point beyond David; they are the faithful mercies promised to David.

The book of the King ([Isaiah] chapters 1—37) portrayed the Messiah as the fulfilment [sic] of the ideal in its royal aspects, but now Isaiah brings the values of the Servant-Messiah within the basic Davidic-Messianic model. It is the Servant, with his prophetic task (42:1-449:2-3; 50:4), who fulfils the role of Davidic witness to the world [cf. 49:1].³²

⁵Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not, and nations *that* knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Ps 18:43.

"Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not" -- at that time Isaiah didn't know about the United States of America, but we are included in his prophecy.³³

The word Him refers not to Israel, but to the Messiah (David's "Son"; cf. Matt. 1:1) for He will be the world's Leader and Commander. The word you (Isa. 55:5) probably refers to Israel, to whom many nations will go to worship the Lord. They will recognize the Lord's splendor ("glory"; cf. 35:2; 46:13; 49:3; 60:9, 21; 61:3; 62:3).³⁴

Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you: Is this addressed to Israel, or to David, as the leader and commander of God's people? Possibly both. Certainly, its ultimate fulfillment is in the millennium, when the nations will flock to Israel (Isaiah 60:5, 60:9).

Because of the LORD your God, and the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you: Why do the nations flock to David and/or Israel? Because the LORD has lifted them up, in accordance with His blessings of restoration.³⁵

³¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

³² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

³⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

The problem in this verse is the identity of "you" (sing.). It does not refer to the "anyone" addressed in verse 3 since this is too broad a field of reference for what the verse describes. It could be the people of God generally, since what the verse describes could apply—to some extent—to all the redeemed. It could be the Servant, in which case the verse means that the whole world would be flocking to David's Great Son. It could also refer to Israel.

In the Millennium, glorified Israel will appeal to Gentile nations (a collective singular *goi*) that would run to her because of her God. It is clear that more than one nation is in view, because the verbs translated "knows" and "run" are plural in the Hebrew text. The last interpretation harmonizes with what Isaiah wrote elsewhere that Israel would do (cf. 2:3; 35:2; 42:4; 46:13; 49:3; 60:9, 21; 61:3; 62:3; 66:18, 21). Perhaps the Servant as the leader of Israel, which also would call thenations, is the solution.³⁶

Although God's message has been to the Jews, He has opened that invitation up to everyone. But now, we see that He is specifically addressing the nation of Israel, when He lets them know that there is another nation that will come running to them because of the Lord glorifying them.

Who is this nation? It is a people group that the Jews did not know - the Gentiles. Some believe that this is fulfilled in the church - even as we read this morning in Acts 10 and 11. But it seems to be more literally fulfilled in the Millennium, when the people of the earth will flock to Jerusalem to hear from God (Isa. 2:2-4).³⁷

Israel's royal status yields benefits for all humanity, who come to recognize, as a result of her redemption, the one true God.

‘Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

A Modern Fallacy

One of the modern fallacies is that men are not required to seek the Lord; that they are not required to repent, pray, call upon God, confess, or do anything else besides believe in order to be saved from sin. The truth is that all these terms are used many times in Scripture to tell people what they must do to find God, as in the following:

1. Seek (Isa. 55:6; Dt. 4:29; 1Chr. 16:11; 28:9; 2Chr. 7:14; 15:2; Amos 5:6; Mt. 6:33; Acts 15:17; 17:27; Heb. 11:6).
2. Repent (Mt. 3:2; 4:17; Mk. 1:15; 6:12; Lk. 13:1-5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20; 2Cor. 7:8; Rev. 2:5,16).
3. Call upon God (Isa. 55:6; Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:9; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-14).
4. Confess (Prov. 28:13; Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5; Rom. 10:9-10; 1Jn. 1:9).
5. Pray (2Chr. 7:14; Lk. 18:10-14; Acts 8:22 (see point 3, above)).
6. Humble self (2Chr. 7:14; Mt. 18:3-4; 23:12; Lk. 14:14; Jas. 4:10).
7. Hear (Mt. 10:14; 11:15; 13:13-15; Jn. 12:47; Rom. 10:9-14).
8. Obey (Rom. 2:4-8; Gal. 3:1; 5:7; 2Th. 1:8; Heb. 5:9; 1Pet. 4:17).

When one truly believes it means that he does these and all the other things required by the gospel (Rom. 10:9-10).

[while he may be found] When God Cannot Be Found

³⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³⁷ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

This suggests a time when men cannot find God. The Bible mentions six of these times:

1. When they turn their hearts away from Him and will not hear (Dt. 30:17-18; 1Sam. 28:6; 1Chr. 10:13-14; Ps. 95:7-11; Jer. 11:10-12; Mt. 13:13-15).
2. When they mock God and scorn at His dealings until calamity comes (Prov. 1:23-31).
3. When they become too proud and stubborn to humble themselves before Him (Num. 16).
4. When they neglect to settle all matters with Him until judgment falls (Acts 5:1-11).
5. When they die in sin (Heb. 9:27).
6. When they blaspheme the Holy Spirit (Mt. 12:31-32).³⁸

The way of God and the way of man are put in contrast and conflict. The objection is often made that this is not a legitimate gospel call for today since man is not asked to seek God, but rather God is seeking man. This certainly is accurate, but nonetheless this call is for today, as the human aspect is in view here. Human responsibility is not defeated by the sovereign purposes and election of God. Therefore the Lord Jesus could say, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). You can sit on the sidelines and argue that you are not one of the elect; but the minute you come, you are a member of the elect. And the coming is up to you.³⁹

Isaiah tells us to call on the Lord while he is near. God is not planning to move away from us, but we often move far from him or erect barriers of sin between us. Don't wait until you have drifted far away from God to seek him. Turning to him may be far more difficult later in life. Or God may come to judge the earth before you decide to turn to him. Seek God now, while you can, before it is too late.⁴⁰

The wicked (v. 7) are commanded to seek and call on the Lord (v. 6), and to do so while He may be found, because when His judgment comes it will be too late. Such seeking and calling means that an individual will turn from his former evil way and thoughts. Turning to the Lord one receives mercy and pardon. In every dispensation the Lord has required the same thing for salvation: trust in Him. Israelites, though God's covenant people, were saved only by believing in the Lord.⁴¹

Seek the LORD while He may be found: The prophet impresses a sense of urgency on God's people. "This is the time. God can be found now. Seek Him now." It isn't that God is hidden, and can only be found now. It is that He can only be found when our hearts are inclined to look for Him, and that inclination itself is a gift from God! We must receive the gift, and make the most of it while we have it. Not seeking, and failing to call upon Him while He is near, means we will not receive the blessings He promises.⁴²

³⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁰ Life Application Study Bible.

⁴¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

⁴² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

The Lord had reached out to humanity by promising free salvation through His prophet. The listeners needed to respond to Him because those promises would not always be available to them.

We could translate while he may be found as 'while he permits himself to be found' (tolerative niphath), indicating a divinely determined day of grace and salvation.

God cannot be found at any time but only when He desires to be found. What is implied is that the present, when these commands are given, is the time of salvation. The thought is similar to that expressed in 2 Corinthians 6:2 and John 12:35.

Seeking and calling on the Lord represent reaching out to Him in faith (cf. Acts 2:21; 15:17; 17:27; 22:16; Rom. 3:11; 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:22). This is necessary because there is no peace for the wicked (48:22; 57:21).⁴³

6-7 And again, a call to all people to seek the Lord. Notice that He must be sought while He may be found. Today needs to be the day of salvation, because God has said,

Gen. 6:3 ...“My Spirit shall not strive with man forever...”

There will be people who reject the Lord so long that they will be like Esau, coming up short of the grace of God (Heb. 12:15), because they waited too long in their bitterness.

Heb. 12:17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.⁴⁴

And so we need to call upon the Lord now, forsaking wicked ways. God calls for those who stray from Him to return, and they will receive compassion from Him.

⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Three Commands to the Wicked

1. He must forsake his wicked ways (Isa. 55:7).
2. He must forsake his unrighteous thoughts.
3. He must return to the Lord.

These things constitute genuine repentance, the kind that needs not to be repented of (2Cor. 7:9-10). As long as one continues in his wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts, he is still in rebellion and sin and is not returning to God with the whole heart. He still commits sins that have the death penalty and therefore continually incurs such penalty of the broken law, living under the death sentence (Mk. 6:19-21; Rom. 1:18-32; 1Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21).

[return unto the LORD]

Returning to the Lord implies that all men are backsliders and were one time in harmony with the Lord. When? When the whole race was in grace before Adam fell. Adam and Eve were the whole race and when they sinned it backslid; now it must return to God (as individuals) to be saved. The Hebrew word for "return" is shuwb (HSN-<H7725>), to turn back with the idea to return to the starting point. It is often translated "again," which further confirms the fact of doing something a second time and not the first. Its first use shows that man came from the dust and

⁴³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁴⁴ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

will return to dust -- in death (Gen. 3:19). So here, man came from God and should return to Him in repentance to be reconciled to Him again. Note the use of the word in reference to returning or coming again to a former state (Gen. 16:9; 31:3,13; Dt. 30:2-3,8).

[he will have mercy upon him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon]

Two promises to the penitent:

1. God will have mercy upon him.
2. He will abundantly pardon.

[abundantly] Hebrew: rabah (HSN-<H7235>), increase; be in abundance; excel; be full of; heap; multiply; have plenty (Isa. 55:7; 2Sam. 12:30; 2Chr. 31:5). The idea here is that God will pardon every kind of transgression, without exception (cp. Mt. 12:31).⁴⁵

The problem people have today is not mental. You may say, "I have great intellectual hurdles to surmount before I can come to Christ." No, you don't. You have only one -- that is sin in your life that you don't want to give up. That is the one thing that keeps men from God. "Let the wicked forsake his way," and when you do, then you will be ready to turn to Him. That is when you really get thirsty.⁴⁶

The term "thoughts" (mahshavah, Heb.) refers to one's intentions, goals, or ambitions (cf. Gen 6:5; Ps 33:10). The term "way" (derek, Heb.) speaks of the schemes and methods by which a person tries to reach his goals apart from God. The verb "pardon" (salah, Heb.) in Scripture always has God as its subject (cf. Dan 9:9). It is a synonym for various Hebrew terms referring to the forgiveness of God (cf. Lev 4:20; 1 Kin 8:30, 34; Ps 86:5).⁴⁷

Let the wicked forsake his way: The prophet impresses the need for repentance among God's people. Repentance is simply turning around our way - turning from our own way, turning unto God's way. Simply, this is what it means to return to the LORD, and we can never walk on God's way until we forsake our own way. The LORD's glorious restoration works in and through our repentance.

Isaiah makes an important point when he says, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Wickedness may be demonstrated by our actions (our way); but unrighteousness can be found in our very thoughts. The battleground for a righteous walk with the LORD is often found in our minds, in our thoughts. Paul knew this also when he wrote of bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), and how we must not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).

And He will have mercy on him: What a glorious promise! When we turn to the LORD, He will have mercy on us! In fact, He will abundantly pardon! The problem is never that we turn to the LORD and find that He rejects us. The problem is that we fail to return to the LORD!⁴⁸

The way was open for anyone to return to the Lord who may have wandered away from Him or rebelled against Him. The promise of a compassionate reception and abundant pardon applied, even to the wicked in act and the unrighteous in thought—in other words: to any sinner (cf. Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28).

⁴⁵Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁷ Believers Study Bible

⁴⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

Repentance is not something a person must do before God will accept him or her. It is simply a description of what seeking the Lord looks like. In other words, cleaning up one's life is not a precondition for acceptance by God. The person who genuinely seeks the Lord and calls on His name has come to grips with his or her sin and is willing to turn it over to the Lord. After all, an unsaved person cannot forsake sin—or even desire to do so—without the Lord's help.

God can pardon sinners because of the Servant's work in paying the debt of their sins in their place. Clearly, a way back from Babylonian exile is not what Isaiah was describing here—but a way back to God.⁴⁹

⁸For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

God's way is different from man's way. The gospel is God's way. It is not man-made. No man could ever have devised it. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). The gospel came down from heaven. It is God's gospel.⁵⁰

God's compassion on those who turn to Him (vv. 6-7) comes because His thoughts and ways are far superior to human thoughts and ways, which in fact are evil (cf. v. 7). God's plan is something people would have never dreamed of.⁵¹

These verses are intended to motivate repentance by explaining that the Lord's plans and methods are better than those a man may devise on his own (cf. Rom 8:28; Phil 1:6).

8-9 Sinners need to forsake their ways and thoughts (actions and attitudes, v. 7) because they are not God's ways and thoughts. God's way is forgiveness and His thoughts are compassionate (v. 7), as far different from those of sinners as the heavens are higher than the earth. Sinners must make a break with their thoughts and ways to have fellowship with a holy God. The Servant's work makes relationship with a holy God possible, but our work, having appropriated the Servant's work by faith, makes intimate fellowship with a holy God possible.⁵²

Of course, we are people who hold grudges. We say we forgive, but we keep a record of wrongs to guard against someone treating us that way again.

But God doesn't think like we do. And God doesn't operate in the same manner as us. The Lord's ways and thoughts are so much higher than ours. And for that, I'm thankful. Because if God was like me, then He would have smitten everyone on the planet long ago.⁵³

8-11: The trustworthiness of God's words. Deutero-Isaiah picks up the metaphor of water from v. 1 in a new way to emphasize a favorite theme: God's promises and the prophecies God issued through the prophets never fail to come true. Cf. 45:23. The metaphor is significant: God sends rain, which inevitably falls to the ground; then it is absorbed by soil and nourishes vegetation.

⁴⁹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁵⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁵² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁵³ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

Humans in turn harvest the vegetation and transform it into food. Similarly, God's word is sure to have a series of effects, the most important of which are indirect and involve human input.⁵⁴

⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Two comparisons:

1. Heavens higher than earth, so God's ways above our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts
2. As rain and snow water the earth, making it fruitful, so God's Word will accomplish its purpose (Isa. 55:10-11)⁵⁵

The people of Israel were foolish to act as if they knew what God was thinking and planning. His knowledge and wisdom are far greater than any human's. We are foolish to try to fit God into our mold—to make his plans and purposes conform to ours. Instead, we must strive to fit into his plans.⁵⁶

For My thoughts are not your thoughts: God doesn't think the way we do. We get into a lot of trouble when we expect that He should think as we do. Because we are made in the image of God, we can relate to God's thoughts, but we cannot master them.

Nor are your ways My ways: God doesn't act the way we do. He does things His way, and His ways are often not our ways. We get into a lot of trouble when we expect that God should act the way we do.

How far is the distance between God's thoughts and ours? How far is the distance between His ways and ours? The distance is as great as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Gloriously, in Jesus Christ, heaven has come down to earth, and we can have our thoughts and ways transformed to be more like God's thoughts and ways. This is what it means to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). The distance will never be closed; God will always be God, and we will always be human. But when our salvation is complete, and we are united with the LORD in glory, the distance will be as close as is possible.

The difference and distance between God and man is revealed, not to discourage us from seeking Him, but to keep us humble as we seek. "You may conclude that it is not intended that you should understand the infinite, for you are told that his thoughts and ways are far above you; but you are required to seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." (Spurgeon)⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Jewish Study Bible Notes

⁵⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁶ Life Application Study Bible.

⁵⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

¹⁰For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

“Rain..sower...word” - Mt 13.

[returneth not thither, but watereth the earth] That is, the rain and snow do not return in this form; in other forms the moisture returns and then falls again as rain and snow (Ps. 135:7; Jer. 10:13; 51:16).⁵⁸

In this closing section there is a prominence given to the Word of God. The only place where the gospel is found is in the Word of God. Salvation is a revelation of God, and the Word of God is likened to the rain that comes down from heaven. You see, the gospel is not asking you to do something. Neither is the gospel something that man has thought up. Man does not work his way up to God by some Tower of Babel effort, but he receives God's revelation which comes down from heaven like rain. The rain causes the earth to become fruitful. The seeds germinate and fructify and bring forth abundantly. The Word of God is also the seed; and, when the rain and seed get together in the human heart, there will be fruit.⁵⁹

Having spoken of the future time of blessing (the Millennium) and the salvation which leads to it, the Lord then assured believers that His Word... will accomplish what He says it will. His word is like rain and snow that water the earth and help give it abundant vegetation. In the Near East dry hard ground can seemingly overnight sprout with vegetation after the first rains of the rainy season. Similarly when God speaks His Word, it brings forth spiritual life, thus accomplishing His purpose.⁶⁰

For as the rain comes down: Using the figure of the water cycle, the LORD illustrates the essential principle that His word shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please. Rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return before serving their purpose on earth (they water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud). The rain and snow eventually do return to heaven, but not before accomplishing their purpose on earth. Even so, God's Word, when He sends it down from heaven, does not return to Him void. Instead, it always fulfills His purpose on earth.

This means that God is not just "all talk." When He talks, His words accomplish His intended purpose. The word of the LORD has power, and it never fails in His intended purpose.

Make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: The use of these pictures to illustrate the operation of God's Word shows that God's Word brings forth fruit. It also shows that the fruit has many different applications. The same grain that gives seed to the sower also gives bread to the eater.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁶¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

10-11 There is a second reason sinners need to change their ways and thoughts, with the Lord's help, and that is because the Word of the Lord is absolutely dependable. All that God has said is reliable, including His promise of pardon and compassion (v. 7; cf. 53:10). God's Word is like the rain and snow, the gifts of God from heaven to earth (cf. v. 9). Rain and snow are water in its two forms as it normally comes from heaven to Palestine. Isaiah's use of both rain and snow may indicate the totality of His blessing; every time God sends water from heaven, in whatever form, it brings blessing because it nourishes the earth. Both rain and snow achieve their purpose of bringing life, nourishment, and blessing to humanity (cf. Jer. 29:11; Mark 4:1-20; Heb. 6:7-8). Therefore, since God has promised compassion and forgiveness for those who seek Him, people can count on the fact that if they seek Him, this will be His response.

As the rain furnishes both seed and bread, so the word of God plants the seed of repentance in the heart and feeds the returning sinner with the blessed consequences repentance produces.⁶²

10-11 But God doesn't smite us all. He shows us mercy. Instead of sending out punishing death angels, He sends out His Word, hoping that we hear it and repent.

Some people use verse 11 like a magic spell. "Well, if I preach the Word, it's gonna plant the seed and people won't be able to resist the Lord. Because the Word never returns void!"

Other people take issue with verse 11. They say, "Well, since people don't repent every time I preach the Word, this verse can't be accurate."

The key to understanding this is to remember that Jesus told us Satan comes and takes away the Word that has been sown in some people (Mark 4:15). Does this nullify verse 11? No. God has shown us that the Word will have one of two results: either a broken heart or a hardened heart.

So even when the Word is rejected by the hearers, it's still accomplishing God's purpose. God sent Moses to Pharaoh to speak the Word, knowing it would harden Pharaoh's heart. That word didn't return to God empty. It accomplished exactly what the Lord desired it to do. It succeeded in the matter for which He sent it.⁶³

¹¹So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Cf. Eccl 1:7

"Expositional Constancy" - idioms used throughout the Bible are often used in the same way. "My Word ... shall not return unto me void."⁶⁴

The Word of God

The Word of God, like rain and snow that water the earth and cause it to produce fruit, will be sown in the hearts of men and produce fruit in the moral world (Isa. 55:11; Dt. 32:2). As the rain and snow fall on various kinds of ground, so does the Word of God (Mt. 13:3-8,20-23). Like rain and snow, it will accomplish its best good in the eternal reign of the Messiah, when the

⁶² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁶³ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

⁶⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth (Isa. 11:9). Thus, the final fulfillment of this scripture will be in the future; there is only a partial fulfillment at present in the preaching of the gospel.⁶⁵

It shall accomplish what I please: God's Word has something to accomplish. God doesn't just speak to hear Himself talk. His Word is not empty, or lacking in power. This also means that God's Word has a purpose. He didn't speak in unfathomable mysteries just to blow our minds, or confuse us, or leave things up to any possible interpretation. When God speaks, He speaks to accomplish a purpose.

It shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it: God's Word doesn't "barely" get the job done. It shall prosper in the purpose God has for it. It is rich and full of life. God's Word always succeeds, and always fulfills God's purpose.

This doesn't mean that it doesn't matter how God's Word is presented. Sometimes a terrible sermon has been excused by saying, "God's Word doesn't return void." The principle is clear and true from this passage of Isaiah, but by the preacher's poor preparation or preaching, there has been little of God's Word put forth. The preacher can ignore, dilute, or obscure God's Word so that little goes forth. When little goes forth, that little will succeed - but how much better if more of the whole counsel of God went forth to succeed!⁶⁶

¹²For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

Cf. Rom 8:16; Ps 98:8.

Go out (or forth) from the lands of your wanderings, referring again to the final and complete regathering of Israel from all nations (Isa. 11:10-12, notes). In their regathering at the second coming of Christ, the mountains, hills, and trees of Palestine are to rejoice at their return. In that day the curse will be removed from plants and trees, and the state of all things will be as before the fall of Adam (Isa. 55:13; 35:1-10; cp. Ps. 98:8).⁶⁷

The rain causes the earth to respond with a green blanket of praise to God. During the Millennium the earth will respond with a note of praise to the Creator and Redeemer. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22).⁶⁸

Because of salvation the effects of sin will be reversed in the Millennium, including the provision of inner joy and peace (see comments on 54:10) and changes in the physical creation. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden thorns and thistles began to choke out the good vegetation and Adam's work to grow good crops was increased (Gen. 3:17-19). But in the future even nature will be joyful (Isa. 55:12b). The trees personified as clapping with hands (branches moving in the wind) suggests the joy people will have because of the changes in nature. Various kinds of trees will grow instead of the thornbush and briars. Fertility on the earth will be a sign that God is in control. Many interpreters say this imagery (v. 13a) symbolizes what

⁶⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

⁶⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

God does in a person's heart at salvation. True, God does change individuals. But the earth will indeed be unusually fertile during the whole Millennium (cf., 35:1-2, 41:18-19; 44:3a).⁶⁹

For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace: When God's people turn to Him, listen to Him, and His Word does His work in them, joy and peace are always the result. The joy is so great, that even the mountains and the hills, and the trees of the field join in!⁷⁰

The "For" (Heb. ki) that begins this verse serves to introduce the conclusion to this pericope (vv. 6-13), and the entire section dealing with God's atonement (chs. 40—55). "Surely" (the asseverative use of ki) would be a good translation.

Throughout this section Isaiah was describing another exodus, a redemption from sin, that the Servant would make possible. In view of that redemption, sinners need to seek the Lord, to come to Him for it (vv. 6-11). Now the prophet concluded, by describing the redeemed, led forth from their "Egypt," going out on their journey to their "Promised Land."

They would do so with joy and peace because of the redemption that the Lamb of God would provide. As they would do so, all creation would rejoice because sin had been dealt with for all eternity. This description also fits the return of God's people to the Promised Land, in the Millennium, that the prophet spoke of earlier (51:11).⁷¹

12-13 Again, some have interpreted this verse to be a prophecy of the return from the Babylonian Captivity. But I believe that this also speaks of the Millennium, when God will make a roadway in the wilderness (Isa. 43:19) and gather the Jews from all parts of the earth - some being carried by angels (Matt. 24:31). And the earth will rejoice, for the restoration of all things will have begun (Acts 3:21).

In that day, the vegetation of the land will be incredibly fruitful:

Is. 29:17 ...Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field, and the fertile field will be considered as a forest

Is. 51:3 ...her (Zion's) wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD...

Zech. 14:8-10 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. All the land will be changed into a plain from GHEH-bah to Rim-MONE south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Khan-an-ALE to the king's wine presses.⁷²

⁶⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

⁷⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

⁷¹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁷² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5501.php>

12-13: The exodus from Babylonia. The prophet again calls on the exiles to leave Babylonia. Cf. 48.20-23; 49.13; 52.11-12. The Lord's promise of glorious restoration will be fulfilled, but as the preceding vv. imply, the nature of their fulfillment may be indirect and will depend on human response to God's invitation. The prophet may be responding to the failure of most Judeans to move back to Zion after the Persian king Cyrus allowed them to do so in the 530s BCE.⁷³

13 **Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.**

“Thorn” - Acacia bush (Ex 4)

This verse looks forward to the Millennium when the earth will be redeemed from the curse of sin. The curse of sin is expressed by the thorn and brier. When Christ died, He not only redeemed sinners, He also redeemed a sin-cursed earth.⁷⁴

Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree: Where before there was barrenness and reminders of the curse (the thorn), now there will be beautiful and useful trees. The picture is clear; in His glorious work of restoration, God takes away the barren and the cursed, and brings forth beauty and fruit.

It shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off: When the LORD restores, all the work is done for His name, and for His glory. When the LORD restores, the work is secure; it is an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.⁷⁵

The replanting of productive, desirable trees and shrubs (representing all creation), in place of plants bearing the marks of the Fall and its curse, symbolizes the rejuvenation of creation. This transformation, and behind it the redemption accomplished by the Servant, would be a memorial that would honor Yahweh. It would be an everlasting sign of God's salvation that would remain forever.

Isaiah mentioned three things that would be everlasting in chapters 54 and 55: His lovingkindness (Heb. hesed, 54:8), His covenant with His people (55:3), and this sign. This sign recalls the sign of the child to come (7:14). As that sign would be an immediate and physical proof that Messiah would come, so this sign would be the same kind of proof that the Servant had come.

The transformation of the world following the lifting of the curse will be observable. While this description is obviously figurative—hills do not shout for joy, and trees do not clap their hands literally—it represents a real change in nature, not just the joy that will pervade all creation. This is a description of millennial conditions on the earth after Jesus Christ returns to the earth to rule and reign (cf. 35:1-2; 41:18-19; 44:3). If it were not so, there would be no everlasting sign. As the Passover was a sign to the Israelites of God's first redemption of them

⁷³ Jewish Study Bible Notes

⁷⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁷⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-55.cfm?a=734001

from Egyptian bondage, the transformed earth and people will be a sign to all God's people of His second redemption of them from Satan's bondage.⁷⁶

The prophet concludes both this chapter and all of chs. 40-55 with a vision of the triumph of God's grace, when the effects of sin and the fall (see Gen. 3:17; 6:11–13) are rectified and “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). before you. The redeemed, proceeding at last into their eternal joys, are the occasion for the creation to break forth into singing. Instead of the thorn. The image is of arid, unproductive land being transformed. a name . . . an everlasting sign. God will be forever glorified by the display of his triumphant grace.⁷⁷

Word Focus - sign (Heb. 'ot) (7:14, 19:20; 55:13, Gen. 1:14) H226: The Hebrew word for sign refers to something which is marked off or made distinct. God gave circumcision to Israel as a sign of their covenant relationship with Him, the fact that they were set apart for Him (Gen. 17:11). The word was also used to call attention to a particular event and God's promises surrounding that event. For instance, the rainbow is a reminder of the Flood and God's promise to refrain from destroying the earth with a flood again (Gen. 9:13). God promised to provide a clear sign of the coming Messiah in His virgin birth (7:14). The counterpart of this word in the New Testament (Gk. semeion) is used widely by the gospel writers (Matt. 16:4; Mark 8:12; John 2:11) to refer to Jesus' miraculous signs which confirmed His divinity.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁷⁷ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁷⁸ Nelson's Study Bible