

## Isaiah 66

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(R. L. Allan)

In the last days, when the things of Israel become the subject of divine notice again, we know that two Objects will present themselves — the nation in a state of apostacy, and the remnant in the midst of them. It will be like the two at one mill, or in one bed, between whom the day of the Lord is to make solemn discernment. But as this will be so in the time of the Jewish nation by and bye, so is this the style very commonly in the Jewish prophets now, anticipating that time and action. The Spirit in them passes from the one of those objects to the other, in rapid and broken style, and this, also, often in the very same strain or discourse. And this we shall find in the closing chapter of the prophet Isaiah.

Isa. 66: 1, 2. In these verses the Lord, by the prophet, looks at the true Israel, the faithful remnant. He sees them, however, only in one character, but that of the deepest and most affectionate interest to Himself, as a humble and broken-hearted people. It is not what they have heard from Him, done to Him, or suffered for Him, that the Lord here notices, but simply the fragments of their broken, and therefore affectionate, hearts. This is the ornament which with Him is of great price. He knows how to value it. It is that which draws His eye beyond all the bright and wondrous works of His hands, though they be, as we know, His delight and glory. But that which *sympathises with our mind or taste* is really nearer to us than that which *serves our interests*. We know this among ourselves. The one who abroad in the affairs of life will promote our good in the world, is of course valued by us; but the one who can sit with us, and enter into the senses and enjoyments of the heart and mind, is still nearer, and more prized: and so with our God. That which serves His glory is not so near as the poor broken-hearted sinner, or the meek or quiet spirit, for there the deepest sympathies of the divine mind meet their object; and in a character like this the remnant are here under the eye of the *lord*.

Isa. 66: 3, 4. The other thing is then looked at in these next verses — the nation in their abominations, and in their own ways, and in their apostate work, and reprobate mind, bring a visitation from the Lord, and a day of judgment from their God.

Isa. 66: 5. The Spirit returns to the true Israel with a word of comfort, and they are invited to listen to a promise that the Lord would appear, to their joy and to the confusion of all that hate them.

Isa. 66: 6. Here this matured confusion is executed and brought on the wicked, all of a sudden. It is, as the Lord Himself says, like the lightning which cometh out of the east, and shineth unto the west; so rapid, so much as in the twinkling of an eye, is this judgment from the Lord, rendering recompense to His enemies.

Isa. 66: 7-14. Such was the doom of the wicked under the glance of the Lord. But these verses tell us that there is another scene of rapid action. For if the judgment, as of lightning, have removed the wicked, the presence of the Lord has adopted and filled Jerusalem, and seated her in her millennial place, as the mother of children on the right hand and on the left. For "the Lord is there." The new covenant is the mystic free-woman or Sarah, the mother of the children, and it will have its blood and its priest in these days of the kingdom at Jerusalem, when the wicked have been removed. Jesus, now hid in the heavens, in the Jerusalem above, is there ministering this new covenant (Gal. 4), but then He will have come to Zion as the Deliverer, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and Zion will then be the mother, the Zion of the land of Israel, as the "Jerusalem above," is now the mother; and the ancient

pain and penalty will be taken off. It will not be said to her, "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." but "as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Because the Lord is there, in His own proper energy. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith the Lord?" "I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." This explains to us this birth without the ancient penalty. And when she has thus brought forth her children, this mother will nurture and cherish them; she will satisfy them from her breasts, and nurse them on her knees; the children of the kingdom shall feed on the choice provisions of Zion, and then keep their holidays to the Lord, delighting themselves with the abundance of her glory. All the people shall have the thoughts of children towards Zion. Zion shall be their centre, and their source; and from the east and the west, the north and the south, their streams and their flocks shall ebb and flow there. And their "bones shall flourish like an herb" — they shall be, as it were, young again. For as sorrow makes the bones old (Psalm 32), joy, as it were, makes them young. The lame shall dance, and the dumb shall sing, and the eye shall see out of obscurity. Their flesh shall come to them as the flesh of a little child after the leprosy, and the vigour of the preserved Israel shall be like the greenness or spring-time of the herb: it will be a season of resurrection to them.

Isa. 66: 15-18. Again the prophet returns to the scene of judgment, in which he here lets us know that the Gentile nations will be involved together with the apostate Israel. All shall be gathered then as to "the valley of decision," where the Lord will display Himself in the glory of righteous, omnipotent, irresistible judgment. (See Joel 3)

Isa. 66: 19, 20. But in the midst of this tremendous day of His anger on the nations, the prophet here intimates that the Lord will give some sign, at which, it may be, there will be repentance and return of heart, and then an escape out of this day of wrath. This is striking. This is a remnant from the nations brought to the Lord, as at the eleventh hour. Zechariah intimates the same thing. (Zech. 14: 14.) Only Isaiah teaches the additional fact, that this repentance has arisen from taking heed to some sign given by the Lord in the midst of that terrible day. And Zechariah tells us that this preserved Gentile people shall wait on the Lord's feast year by year; and Isaiah here tells us that they shall be engaged both in publishing the glory to their distant fellow Gentiles, and aid in gathering home the still dispersed ones of Israel to Judah, then to be taken as ministers of the Lord's sanctuary in the holy mountain Jerusalem.

Isa. 66: 22-24. In these closing verses the kingdom, to which all the previous action was preparatory, is understood to have come, and the Lord looks at Israel, the nations, and the scene of the recent judgment. Israel He promises shall remain before Him as sure as the new heavens and the new earth, of which we know it will not be said, as of the present heavens and earth, that they shall pass away; all flesh around His Israel, He then graciously declares, shall hold their new moons and sabbaths to the Lord in Zion, and as they do so, they shall witness the end of transgressions in the undying worm and unquenchable fire of the Lord's righteous anger; as Sodom is set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. And of all this Zechariah is again another witness, for he in like manner talks of the horrible spectacle which judgment will in that day make of the invaders of Jerusalem, and he also speaks of the nations from year to year holding their feast of tabernacles in Zion to the Lord. (Zech. 14: 12-16.)