

OCTOBER 2

This is the final day in Isaiah. If you've been keeping up, you really, really owe yourself a treat. I'd recommend a Pumpkin Spice Frappuccino at Starbucks®. Or, just find a quiet place and page through Isaiah in a normal Bible and see what you remember. Without a doubt, you have been blessed in reading this in ways you might not even know.

Isaiah 66

Vs. 1-2 Read this and think about it. Do you get the point of what God is saying?

Jesus quotes a part of v. 1 in the Sermon on the Mount when He tells His disciples not to make vows to God.

If you understand what God and Isaiah are saying here, this is the same thought Paul expresses in the last two verses of Romans 11 and the first two verses of Romans 12. I'm willing to bet these two verses of Isaiah were in Paul's mind when he was writing those verses in Romans. I'll ask him when I get to see him.

Vs. 3-4 If our hearts are not obedient to His Word, this is what God thinks of our worship and religious routine, even as believers.

When I spoke they did not listen, reminds me of Jesus saying, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

V. 5 Notice that this is addressed to those who truly are the Lord's, that is, those *who tremble at His Word*. Notice too, the trembling in v. 2. How is your "trembling?"

The words of the brothers here must be either insincere or meant as mockery.

Vs. 6-9 God uses the illustration of labor to say to Israel, "I haven't brought you through all of this to not complete my purpose for you."

Vs. 10-14 So Jerusalem gives birth and all will find consolation and comfort and will nurse there. Interesting. According to Ezekiel and Revelation, there will be a river running out of the temple. On each side of it there will be trees that bear fruit monthly, and there will be healing in the leaves. (Rev. 22:2) The people of the world will come to Jerusalem for healing, and after the Tribulation, they're going to need it. God is going to offer blessing for all who come to His city. And of course the best thing about Jerusalem will be the guy sitting on the throne in the temple.

It will still apparently be a matter of the will for people to come to Jerusalem. Even during the Millennial Kingdom and at the end of it, not everyone will like Jesus. Sin's dominance doesn't need Satan's deception. We can be rebellious all by ourselves if we don't recognize what sin truly is (an incurable spiritual disease) and our need of a Savior.

Vs. 15-17 This judgment seems to be the Messiah judging the nations in opposition to Israel at the end of the Tribulation. Or, it could be a warning for those who rebel against the Messiah and His servant Israel at the end of the thousand years, when Satan is released and finds those ready to wage war against Israel.

Vs. 18-21 This seems to say that Israel will be a servant to all the nations, declaring God's glory to all who don't have an opportunity to come to Jerusalem.

Vs. 22-24 This is after the thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, and there will be a final judgment. (Rev. 21:1-2)

I can't wait. I was reading this morning, *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*. Now, we have the Lord and the Spirit burning in us as we work in the harvest on this dying planet. But the Day is coming.

Philippians 3:4-21

Vs. 4-6 This isn't Paul bragging, but he is really trying to make the Philippians see that they shouldn't be impressed by "credentials." Paul had been the real thing and threw it all away for Jesus.

Vs. 7-11 Notice that the focus of all of this is knowing Jesus. In the past, Paul discovered that salvation by grace through faith meant knowing Christ. Now, even 30 years down the road Paul is still striving to know Christ more. That, I think, is the mark of a disciple who never tires in the harvest and doesn't get older, just wiser and stronger. Knowing our Lord isn't academic or knowledge-oriented; it is a daily ongoing walk. We follow Him in the harvest and He reveals Himself more and more in ways we could never guess. That is why it is by faith. (John 14:21-23)

V. 12 And here is Paul's motivation.

So many believers seem to have the mindset that they got saved, and now they're going to heaven; so the goal is to go to church, enjoy life and stay out of trouble. Knowing Christ is our personal goal, the goal of every disciple. Read that prayer again at the end of Ephesians 3. It all has to do with knowing Jesus and His love.

But Paul's goal here is knowing Christ in such a way that, if possible, he could live on earth as if he were perfectly following Christ. The goal was being so fully focused on Jesus and the blessings and grace available in Him, that Paul would honor God as if he had been resurrected. I'm sure Paul knew this was impossible in this body of death; but if you aim at nothing, you hit it every time. Paul aimed high out of love for Jesus. But that was only for Paul, right?

Vs. 13-14 Paul had a lot to forget from the past. He looked at the future (that's why God has also given us all that stuff in Isaiah) and strained forward in the present. And again, this is only recommended for disciples on steroids, like Paul. Right?

Vs. 15-16 Wrong. It is meant to be the norm for every one of us. It is what makers of disciples are to model so as to make disciples who model the same. A disciple is not above his teacher; but every disciple, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher.

Vs. 17-21 The important thing to see in these verses is that Paul was not crying over lost humanity; he was crying over fallen followers, disciples who defected.

Notice where the focus is, on Jesus and the coming transformation of this body of death. That is our personal hope in the resurrection. You see this expressed in Romans 8 when Paul talks about how the creation is waiting for our redemption.

In the opening verses of Isaiah 66, we had God looking for those who trembled, who were awed by and honored His Word in their hearts and actions. What Paul is saying here is the same thing, just in a different way. The natural response to Christ giving His life for us is to give Him our hearts and do what He says. This involves following Him in the harvest and being treated as He was treated, but also bearing fruit as He bore fruit and glorified the Father. It is simple discipleship.

Psalm 74

Isn't it interesting to read this psalm, having read Isaiah? Notice that the appeal for help focuses more on God defending His name, than defending His people.

Vs. 1-2 The plea to remember the people, His heritage and Zion.

Vs. 3-8 When the Babylonians burned the temple, the gold on the paneling melted and went into crevices between the foundation stones of the temple. They removed these stones to get at the gold. When they were done, the temple was completely ruined.

Vs. 9-11 These are the age old questions. However, Isaiah's ministry revealed the people's hearts. When they had the Word they should have responded. Hearing the Word and ignoring it makes a people dull and ungrateful. When the Word comes to Israel again, it will be like living water. Knowing the love of Christ, the Word and the plan of God is enough to get us through all the rough spots. It is something that God continually teaches us in His "silence."

Vs. 12-17 But, as in Job and in Isaiah, what is known about God, His wisdom in creation and His love, are the things we cling to when He is "silent."

Vs. 18-23 God should see the actions of the nations as an attack on Him and do something about it. He does and He will.

Proverbs 24:15-16

Amen.