

Series: Looking At The Ending of Isaiah

Chapters 40-66



In Isaiah you feel at times the hopeless feeling that Isaiah experienced with the prophecies that followed Hezekiah's failure in chapter 39. This sense of hopelessness is exemplified in the Book of Jeremiah and Lamentations which come about 120 years later.

This seal bulla was discovered in 2018 in Jerusalem, it is possibly the Prophet Isaiah's.

Daniel and his 3 Hebrew friends were taken into captivity about 75 years after Isaiah's death. Many believe this was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah in Isaiah 39 that some of Hezekiah's descents would serve as eunuchs in the Babylonian court. If so, Daniel and his friends were castrated before they entered service to Nebuchadnezzar.

“A Place For The Hopeless and Outsider”

Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15



Christ
Cleanses
The
Temple
by Luca
Giordano
d. 1705

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Isaiah 56 and the prophets following Isaiah deeply impacted Jewish thinking about the gentiles and their acceptance by God. By the time of Jesus Jewish scholars recognized 2 categories of gentiles who were acceptable to God, those who became “proselytes” to the Jewish faith and “God-fearers”.

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Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15



Christ Cleanses The Temple by Luca Giordano d. 1705

Isaiah’s prophecy in these few verses turned Jewish thinking on its head during the “Inter-testamental period” [period between Malachi and Matthew]. About 200 years before Jesus the Hellenized world began to take notice of the Jewish faith and many gentiles were drawn to the Jewish view of God and the ethics of their faith.

Isaiah 56:3-8 [ESV]

3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

4 For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5 I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant —

Isaiah 56:3-8 [ESV]

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." 8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, "I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered."

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Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15



Assyrian King Sargon II with his eunuch retainers following him. Sargon was a contemporary of Hezekiah and Isaiah.

Deuteronomy 23:1-3 [ESV]

1 "No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD. 2 No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD. 3 No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever,...

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Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15



Assyrian King Sargon II with his eunuch retainers following him. Sargon was a contemporary of Hezekiah and Isaiah. The eunuchs wore the robes of court officials yet are unbearded indicating they are eunuchs.

By the time of Isaiah, eunuchs who had once been reserved for guarding the harem of the king had become due to Assyrian practice the standard in royal retainers. The reasons were quite clear. Such men were unable to establish a dynasty. They were generally less emotional and usually had no family allegiance.

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Isaiah 39:3-8 *5-7 [ESV]

5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:

6 Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD.

7 And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

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In addition, eunuchs generally remained youthful in appearance and untouched by sexual desire. The practice was common in eastern European courts until the 1600s and in Chinese courts into the 1800s. This practice usually required a young male in early puberty. It is possible that Daniel and his companions experienced this.

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The Hebrew word for “eunuch” in earlier times was a Mesopotamian loan word meaning “royal servant” by the time of Isaiah it had taken on the primary meaning of “eunuch” unless otherwise indicated. The complaint of being a “dry tree” was a reference to the view that like a dead fruit tree a eunuch was impotent.

Zechariah 8:20-23 [ESV]

20 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. 21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.' 22 Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. 23 Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

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This dedication stone found in the ruins of a Aphrodisias synagogue 300 AD, Turkey. What surprised archeologists was the number of “God-Fearers” memorialized on the stone.

Matthew 8:8-12 [ESV]

8 But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

10 When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

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Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15



The Centurion requests that Jesus heal his servant by William Hole d. 1917

By the time of Jesus a large number of Greek speaking people were followers of the Jewish faith in one God and attempted to follow the ethical practices of the Jewish people. Many went to Jerusalem to attend the temple though they were not permitted to enter the main temple courts.

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The Centurion requests that Jesus heal his servant by William Hole d. 1917

The centurion in this incident is identified by the Jewish leadership in Capernaum as a “righteous gentile”. In acts they are identified as “God-Fearers” and “righteous gentiles”. Josephus, the 1st Century historian also used these terms. From archeology we know there were large numbers of these gentiles.

Matthew 21:12-15 [ESV]

12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, ...

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This dedication stone found in the ruins of a Aphrodisias synagogue 300 AD, Turkey. What surprised archeologists was the number of “God-Fearers” memorialized on the stone.

The Hebrew word for “foreigner” comes from a word that means “to recognize”. The word is negated so that it means “one who is not recognized” and thus not a part of the nation or people. The command in Deuteronomy was so strictly enforced that a barrier was set up in the Temple Complex to prevent gentiles on pain of death from entering.

Genesis 9:1-11 *4-9 [ESV]

3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. 4 But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. 5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. 7 And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. 8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; ...

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By the time of Jesus however the Jewish Rabbis were beginning to formulate what a “Ger Tzedek” or “Righteous Gentile” was. This person was one who followed the covenant of Noah.

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Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15

The “ger tsedek” [righteous gentiles] in Isaiah 56 could find a place in God’s Kingdom by observing:

7 commands of the Noahic Covenant - Genesis 9:1-11:

1. Do not worship idols.
2. Do not curse God.
3. Do not murder.
4. Do not commit adultery or sexual immorality.
5. Do not steal.
6. Do not eat flesh torn from a living animal.
7. Establish courts of justice.

-- the Babylonian Talmud

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Such people still could not enter the main courts of the temple. However, Herod wishing to make the Temple complex a tourist destination built a large court surrounding the main Temple called the “Court of Gentiles”. Commerce was not permitted in the main courts, but money changing, sale of sacrifices and food vending was done in this larger court.

Jeremiah 11:1-11 *5-11 [ESV]

5 "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, 6 if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. 8 Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!' — only to go on doing all these abominations? 11 Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD.

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Jesus clears the temple by James Tissot

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Jesus clears the temple by James Tissot

Only proselytes could enter the Court of Women, but were not permitted entry to the court of sacrifice, but righteous gentiles were only allowed entry to the Court of Gentiles. By the time of Jesus' ministry it had become little more than an open market which would allow devout gentiles to pray or worship in peace.

Acts 8:26-36 *26-28 [ESV]

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

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Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15

Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch by
Alexandre Denis de Pujol 1848

In Isaiah 56, the gentiles complaint of being “separated” from God’s people is given the sense of utter hopelessness by being repeated twice. In both senses the Ethiopian Eunuch was excluded from the temple. He would not have been able to enter the main courts of the temple under any circumstances.



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In the text of Matthew, after Jesus had cleared the Court of Gentiles the lame and blind were permitted to enter and were healed by Jesus. This group of disabled people were not permitted past the Court of Gentiles and were often excluded from the temple complex altogether, forced to beg at the gates.



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Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch by
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Jesus made it clear that those who were hopeless and outsiders were welcome at the God’s House of Prayer for All People when he quoted both Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 11 as he cleared the temple’s outer court to allow those unacceptable to be received.



“A Place For The Hopeless and Outsider”

Isaiah 56:3-8 & Matthew 21:12-15



God gives hope and a future to those trapped in hopeless circumstances and he gives acceptance and purpose to those who are outside.

**Christ Cleanses The Temple by Luca Giordano
d. 1705**

Garrison Church of God

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