



• Closing section of the prophecy

After the great prayer of Isaiah 63:7–64:12 the prophecy of Isaiah has a closing section¹ in which we see God's answer to the prayer. The first twelve verses twice contrast those who are blessed by God² with those who remain in disobedience³.

¹ 65:1-66:24
² 65:1, 8-10
³ 65:2-7, 11-12

1. The blessed owe their salvation entirely to God's mercy

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*¹I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me;
I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me.
To a nation not called by my name,
I said, "Here am I, here am I."*

• God will answer the prayers of His people

God will answer the prayers of his people (those who pray the prayer of 63:7–64:12). Furthermore, when spiritual revival comes God will bless those who never sought him at all, those who never were known as God's people. Isaiah refers to gentiles. They are people who have previously been outside of God's holy people altogether! When God sends revival he not only restores his people; he adds to them people who never knew anything about the God of the Bible at all. God has a habit of stepping into the lives of people who were not looking for him.

• He will also bless gentiles

2. The obstinate are those whom God permits to stay as they are

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*²All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people,
who walk in ways not good,
going after their own thoughts,
³a people who continually provoke me to my very face,
offering sacrifices in gardens
and burning them on altars of brick;
⁴who sit among the graves
and spend their nights in guarded places;
who eat the flesh of pigs,
and whose pots hold broth of unclean meat;
⁵who say, "Keep away; don't come near me,
for I am too sacred for you!"*

• He offers mercy to the obstinate but they will not receive it

He offers mercy to them¹, yet they will not receive it – and he leaves them in their sins. Their way of walking through life¹² and their mentality ('their own thoughts') are both godless. When they reject the God of the Bible they worship strange substitutes. In Isaiah's day true worship was replaced by the worship of fertility gods in religious 'gardens'. Bricks made by man (forbidden by Exodus 20:25) were used by the builders of altars instead of uncut stone (the cleverness of man replacing what is given by God). They sought spiritual guidance in graveyards (thinking the dead might know more than the living). They ate food forbidden in the Mosaic law ('the flesh of pigs') and yet were proud of their religiosity. God sees nothing in it but vile obstinacy.

¹ 65:2a
² 65:2

• They are proud of their religiosity, but God sees nothing but vile obstinacy

*⁶Such people are smoke in my nostrils,
a fire that keeps burning all day.
⁶See, it stands written before me:
I will not keep quiet but will pay back with exact repayment;
I will pay it back into their laps –
⁷both your sins and the sins of your fathers,'
says Yahweh.
Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains*

• If a people are unresponsive to God's truth, God will hate and punish it

*and insulted me on the hills,
I will measure their wage into their laps.'*

No matter how religious a people might be, if it is not a response to the truth God has revealed, then God hates it and punishes it.

3. The blessed are those whom God rescues in his mercy

3. The blessed are those whom God rescues in his mercy. God preserves some people although they might well have been abandoned to destruction.

⁸*This is what Yahweh says:
'As when wine is still found in a cluster of grapes
and men say, "Don't destroy it,
there is yet some good in it,"
so will I do on behalf of my servants;
I will not destroy them all.'*

• God preserves some people that could have been abandoned to destruction

God gives some people a dwelling place although they might well have been left in exile for ever!

• They could have been left in exile forever

⁹*I will bring forth a seed from Jacob,
and from Judah those who will possess my mountains;
my chosen ones will possess them,
and there will my servants live.'*

• A 'seed' – people in the spiritual line of Jacob

God renews some people although they might well have been abandoned to destruction. They are 'a seed' – people in the spiritual line of Jacob who was a rebel but whom God changed to become the spiritual forefather of his people.

• Those who seek Yahweh are given abundance

¹⁰*Sharon will become a pasture for flocks,
and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds,
for my people who have sought me.'*

• Prosperity is a symbol of the success of the kingdom of God

The Valley of Sharon was in the west; Achor was in the east. Those who seek Yahweh and are found by him are given abundance. The picture-language (for we are dealing with prophetic picture-language) is one of peace and prosperity. The prosperity of the land of Israel is used as a symbol for the success of the kingdom of God and (eventually) the new heaven and new earth in which righteousness makes it home.

4. The obstinate are destined for slaughter

4. The obstinate are destined for slaughter. They forget both God himself and the temple-mountain with all that it symbolizes.

¹¹*But as for you who forsake Yahweh
and forget my holy mountain,
who spread a table for Fortune
and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny,
¹²I will destine you for the sword,
and you will all bend down for the slaughter;
for I called but you did not answer,
I spoke but you did not listen.
You did evil in my sight
and chose what displeases me.'*

• They forget God and the temple-mountain and its symbolism

• Their 'fate' will be determined by God

• Evil has no part in God's new Zion

In addition to wilful forgetfulness¹¹ is their turning to the rites and ceremonies of foreign gods, wanting to trust 'good luck' or 'fate' to be their guide. But their 'fate' will be determined by God and there will be nothing good in it for them. Their unresponsiveness¹², their unwillingness to hear¹³ and their resulting lifestyle¹⁴ all call down God's judgement upon them. In the eternal dwelling place, God's new Zion, evil has no part.

11 65:11
12 65:12a
13 65:12b
14 65:12c