



# Preaching Through The Bible, Michael Eaton

## Isaiah

### Part 93

### A Nation Born in a Day (66:1-14)

• Contrast between the wicked and the godly

#### 1. First Isaiah reminds us of God's greatness

The last chapter of Isaiah's prophecy continues to develop the contrast between those who are blessed by God<sup>1</sup> and those who come under God's anger<sup>2</sup>. Different lines of the poetry make the same contrast between the wicked<sup>3</sup> and the godly<sup>4</sup>.

1 65:1, 8-10, 13-25  
2 65:2-7, 11-12  
3 66:3-4, 5c-6  
4 66:2, 5a-b

**1. First Isaiah reminds us of God's greatness.** The One who speaks is the great King. He is like a giant sitting in the whole of heaven as his throne, with the earth as a stool on which to rest his feet. The temple is inadequate as a home for God.

*<sup>1</sup>This is what Yahweh says:  
'Heaven is my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool.'*

• Like a giant with heaven as His throne

• No temple can fully represent God

So great is he that any temple will fail to fully represent God or be a place where God's glory will reside.

*'Where is the house you will build for me?  
Where will my resting place be?  
<sup>2</sup>My hand has made all these things,  
and all these things came into being' –  
it is an oracle of Yahweh.*

#### 2. The true dwelling-place of God is the humble heart

**2. The true dwelling-place of God is the humble heart.** It is not that God despises his temple. He did indeed reveal himself in it. But God knows it is inadequate! God cannot be confined to a building. And there is nothing we can give to God as his house which was not his already. He is always enthroned over the whole universe. So if the temple is inadequate to be God's home, where would God like to dwell? Isaiah has the answer.

• God cannot be confined to a building

• God respects the humble worshipper

*'To this person will I look,  
to the one who is poor and bruised in spirit,  
and who trembles at my word.'*

God respects the humble worshipper more than even a mighty cathedral! Someone who takes a low position before God attracts his attention more than the mightiest building.

#### 3. The mixture of religion and wickedness angers God

**3. The mixture of religion and wickedness angers God.** Isaiah has something to say about what his contemporaries do at the temple. In Isaiah's time the temple was corrupted by mixing the lawful (sacrificing a bull, offering a lamb, presenting a grain-offering, burning memorial incense) with the illegal (killing a man, breaking a dog's neck, offering pig's blood, worshipping an idol). Isaiah simply puts the activities side by side.

*<sup>3</sup>First sacrificing a bull, then killing a man,  
first offering a lamb, then breaking a dog's neck,  
presenting a grain-offering,  
then offering pig's blood,  
burning memorial incense,  
then worshipping an idol.'*

• The idolaters of Isaiah's day mix lawful and forbidden worship-practices in the temple

The point is that the idolaters of Isaiah's day mix true worship-practices with ugly, forbidden worship-practices.

*'They have chosen their own ways,  
and their souls delight in their abominations.'*

• God hates this +  
He will punish it

But this is something God hates and must punish.

*‘So I also will choose their execution,  
and will bring upon them what they dread.’*

4. In the midst  
of the temple  
activities is  
unresponsive-  
ness to God  
himself

4. In the midst of the temple activities is unresponsiveness to God himself.

*‘For when I called, no one answered,  
when I spoke, no one listened.  
They did evil in my sight  
and chose what displeases me.’*

Behind the idolatry was self-will, unresponsiveness in refusing to answer or even to listen.

5. Isaiah calls  
the godly to  
persist in  
loyalty despite  
ridicule and  
opposition

5. Isaiah calls the godly to persist in loyalty despite ridicule and opposition.

*‘Hear the word of Yahweh,  
you who tremble at his word:  
“Your brothers who hate you  
and exclude you because of my name, have said,  
‘Let Yahweh be glorified,  
that we may see your joy!’”’*

• He speaks of the  
punishment the  
ungodly will face

Isaiah speaks to the godly<sup>1</sup> about the ungodly<sup>2</sup> who ridicule the godly<sup>3</sup>. He then speaks of the punishment that the wicked will face<sup>4</sup> and its suddenness<sup>5</sup>.

1 66:5a–b  
2 66:5c–d  
3 66:5e–f  
4 66:5g–6  
5 66:7–8b

• Even fellow  
church-members  
are likely to  
ridicule loyalty to  
God’s word

Even our ‘brothers’ – our fellow-citizens, fellow ‘church-members’ – are likely to ridicule loyalty to God’s word and devotion to his ‘name’ (that is, his honour and reputation). ‘You people are only happy when your “Yahweh” is being honoured’, they say. It is true, but they say it sarcastically!

*‘Yet they will be put to shame.  
6 Listen! There is uproar from the city!  
Listen! It comes from the temple!  
Listen! Yahweh is repaying his enemies all they deserve.  
7 Before she goes into labour,  
she gives birth;  
before the pains come upon her,  
she delivers a son.  
8 Who has ever heard of such a thing?  
Who has ever seen such things?  
Can a country be born in a day  
or a nation be brought forth in a moment?  
Yet no sooner is Zion in labour  
than she gives birth to her children.’*

• Such ridicule  
will bring God’s  
judgement – at  
great speed

Ridicule of God and his word will bring God’s judgement. It may be slow in coming but as soon as it appears it arrives with great speed. When calamities fall in the world no one is given even twenty-four hours’ notice. Within a few minutes something can happen that makes whole countries face a different future. It has happened even in our own times.

• The same  
suddenness when  
God’s people are  
given newness of  
life

The same suddenness will be present when God’s people are given newness of life<sup>1</sup>. God is the one who brings new life<sup>2</sup>. We are called to identify with Jerusalem<sup>3</sup> that we might share her blessings<sup>4</sup>. God gives great promises concerning Jerusalem<sup>5</sup>. The fulfilment of the promise is certain<sup>6</sup>

1 66:8  
2 66:9  
3 66:10  
4 66:11  
5 66:12–13  
6 66:14

*‘Do I bring to the moment of birth  
and not give delivery?’ says Yahweh  
‘Or do I conceive children  
and then close up the womb?’*

• God gives great promises about Jerusalem – their fulfilment is certain

says your God.

<sup>10</sup>Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her,  
all you who love her;  
rejoice greatly with her,  
all you who mourn over her,

<sup>11</sup>in order that you will nurse and be satisfied  
at her comforting breasts;  
in order that you will drink deeply  
and delight in her glorious bosom.'

<sup>12</sup>For this is what Yahweh says:

'I will extend peace to her like a river,  
and the glory of nations like a flooding stream;  
you will feed at her breast and be carried on her arm  
and fondled as you sit on her lap.

<sup>13</sup>As a mother comforts her child,  
so will I comfort you;  
and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.'

<sup>14</sup>And you will see this, and your heart will rejoice  
and your bones will flourish like grass.  
The hand of Yahweh will be made known to his servants,  
but his fury will be shown to his foes.

• The godly are asked to live for the day when God unexpectedly blesses His people

• All Isaiah's predictions were fulfilled

• The purpose of God went on and continues to do so

• A nation may be born in a day!

Verses 9–14 ask the godly to live for the day when God unexpectedly intervenes to bless his people. Just as a new situation can be 'born in a day' when calamity arrives, the same is true for the righteous. Spiritual blessing can come equally quickly. If Isaiah's contemporaries will identify with the Messiah who is to come to Jerusalem (despite what calamities might strike Jerusalem along the way) eventually there will be blessing.

Isaiah wrote in the eighth century. All his predictions were fulfilled. The Assyrians came and went. The Babylonians exiled the Judeans and destroyed Jerusalem. But the purpose of God went on. The child born of a virgin did come. His name was Jesus. He was crucified in Jerusalem. He rose from the dead. His purposes are still continuing. The nations will be reached. It is still true that a nation can be born in a day. We will experience its blessings even now as we 'tremble at his word' and identify with what he is doing through Jesus, the One who died and rose again in Jerusalem. Our situation may change suddenly. A nation may be born in a day!

**Dr Michael Eaton** (1942-2017) was highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. Born in the UK, he lived for many years in Kenya where he became a citizen. He was one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship in Nairobi. His Preaching through the Bible books are highly popular worldwide, written in a clear and down-to-earth style but underpinned by rigorous scholarship. Some of these books have been reformatted as individual sheets for personal and group study and preaching. The New Testament volumes have been re-edited and combined in the Branch Commentary. The Old Testament, including previously unpublished material will follow. More details: [www.slices.org.uk](http://www.slices.org.uk).