

Isaiah Chapter 58

Verses 58:1 – 66:24

This section describes the future glory for God's people Israel.

The closing chapters of Isaiah (chapters 58-66), introduce the reader to the Messiah's program of peace for the world.

Here we are lifted beyond His first coming to the time of His second coming as Lord, Judge, and King of the universe.

Verses 1-14

"Cry aloud ... show my people their transgression":

This indicates that Isaiah was to shout against the sins of Israel and Judah.

God further warns them that though they delight to "seek me daily," they will be judged for making a mere show of their religion.

The true "fast" is contrasted with the false external show of piety.

Thus God's fast will "loose the bands of wickedness" and "undo the heavy burdens" for those who truly repent.

Verses 1-5

We see a description of religious formalism that manifests itself in improper fasting.

Isaiah 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

This sounds like God giving a message to Isaiah to sound the warning trumpet.

The warning from God, many times, comes from God's workers.

The preachers of our day need to sound the trumpet.

This trumpet of warning is because of the transgressions of the people.

The whole world today is in even worse condition than the house of Jacob in their day.

Sin is running rampant.

God will not sit idly by and let this happen.

The preachers who are not sounding a warning to their people will be responsible for the sins of the people God has for them to minister to.

A shepherd, or shepherdess, guards the sheep. When danger is near, they sound an alarm. They are responsible for the sheep.

Isaiah 58:2 "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God."

“Delight in approaching to God”:

Israel was merely “going through the motions.”

Their appearance of righteousness was mere pretense (1:11).

It seems they had a form of godliness.

They were going through the formality of serving God, but their hearts were not in it.

They were honoring God with keeping the ordinances, but they really did not honor Him in their hearts.

Jesus called this type of person a “whited wall”.

They look good on the outside, but underneath they are nothing.

Some churches today are so formal in their worship, that there is no Spirit.

Ritualistic service is not what God wants.

He wants our hearts.

Verses 3-7

The people complained when God did not recognize their religious actions, but God responded that their fasting had been only halfhearted.

Hypocritical fasting resulted in contention, quarreling, and pretense, excluding the possibility of genuine prayer to God.

Fasting consisted of more than just an outward ritual and a mock repentance, it involved penitence over sin and consequent humility, disconnecting from sin and oppression of others, feeding the hungry and acting humanly toward those in need.

Isaiah 58:3 "Wherefore have we fasted, [say they], and thou seest not? [wherefore] have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors."

The type of fasting they were doing here was a waste of their time.

This fasting was just a show for the world.

It was as if they were saying, I have fasted now, what are you going to do for me in return, God?

It was as if it was a tradeoff.

Speaking of the Jews here, they felt that God had not kept His bargain with them if He did not immediately reward them for fasting.

Fasting should be a time of total dedication to God.

It should be a time of worshipping God, not hampered by things of the world.

God does not owe us anything.

To expect Him to respond is not trusting His judgment.

This type fast would be unacceptable to God, then or now.

Isaiah 58:4 "Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as [ye do this] day, to make your voice to be heard on high."

Fasting should be a private thing between you and God alone.

Look, with me, at what Jesus had to say about this very thing.

Matthew 6:16-18

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

"But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;"

"That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Isaiah 58:5 "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? [is it] to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes [under him]? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?"

The answer to this is "No".

This is not what God wishes.

God does not just want a man to go through the formality of bowing his head to Him.

He does not even want you to tear your clothes, and throw ashes on your head.

God wants you to have a humble heart.

He wants your heart to be stayed upon Him.

The acceptable fast to God is total dedication to Him from your heart.

God is not interested in an outward show.

He wants you to truly love Him in your heart.

Isaiah 58:6 "[Is] not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

Fasting is the discipline of abstaining from food for biblical reasons.

It is called "afflicting one's soul" (verse 3), and is often practiced to demonstrate the sincerity of our prayers.

There are several biblical reasons for fasting.

Christians should fast when facing a national crisis (2 Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Esther 4:16), for individual needs (Matt. 17:21), during periods of distress (2 Sam. 3:35; Psalm 35:13), when facing spiritual decisions (Matt. 4:2; Acts 13:2), and in anticipation of Christ's return (Luke 5:35).

Many people have found that heavy burdens are relieved through fasting (chapter 58), wisdom is obtained through fasting (Dan. 10), revival comes from fasting (verse 6), God's protection from danger is secured by fasting (1 Kings 21:27-29), recovery of a sick loved one may come after fasting (Psalm 35:13), and the inauguration of a great ministry may follow fasting (Matt. 4:2).

When a Christian fasts, he should begin with a short fast, one day from sundown to sundown, and attempt to spend time alone with God during the fast. (Isa. 58:6; James 5:14).

God is saying in this, if your heart is right with Me, set the captives free.

Stop laying burdens on others too heavy to bear.

Break every yoke you have placed on others.

Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

Above all, Love God with your whole heart.

This is the acceptable fast to God.

Isaiah 58:7 "[Is it] not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

Jesus said it this way, "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these thy brethren, you have done it unto me".

Feed the hungry, clothe the naked.

Help those who cannot help themselves.

Help those who are in the family of God.

Isaiah 58:8 "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward."

"Thy righteousness ... be thy reward":

When Israel learned the proper way to fast, she would enjoy the blessings of salvation and the Messiah's kingdom (52:12).

I love the following Scripture that says the same thing.

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

When you are full of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are full of His Light, for He is the Light of the world.

This is that new life in Christ that we speak of.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

It is not necessary to tell people you belong to God, when you have Christ living in you.

They will know it by the life you live.

Isaiah 58:9 "Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I [am]. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;"

"Here I am": (see 65:1).

In contrast with the complaint of (verse 3), a time will come when the Lord will be completely responsive to the prayers of the people (65:24).

This will be done when they are converted and giving evidence of the transformation in the kind of works that reflect a truly repentant heart (verses 9-10).

"If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke":

Of human inventions, doctrines, rites and ceremonies, as in Isaiah 58:6.

"The putting forth of the finger":

Pointing at those that could not comply with them, by way of scorn and derision, as puritans, schismatics, etc. and persecuting them for it.

James 5:16-17 "Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Now, we see how to get our prayers answered.

We must be in right standing with God.

When we pray, He answers.

Remember the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is a biblical concept spoken by Jesus in Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12.

Mark 11:25 "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Isaiah 58:10 "And [if] thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness [be] as the noon day:"

When you have love and compassion for others and help them in their need, the Light of God within you becomes brighter and brighter.

This Light does away with all darkness.

To be possessed of the Light of Jesus Christ does away with all darkness.

Isaiah 58:11 "And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

Jesus says it the best in the following Scripture.

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Psalm 37:25 "I have been young, and [now] am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Isaiah 58:12 "And [they that shall be] of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

“Build the old waste places”:

In view here is the final restoration of the millennial Jerusalem, of which Nehemiah’s rebuilding of the walls (Nehemiah 2:17), was only a foretaste.

Israel was in a terrible state at the time Isaiah wrote this.

God will bring them back into the land and it will flourish, if they keep His commandments.

This is, also, speaking of the time when the veil in the temple will be torn from the top to the bottom opening the way to God for all who will believe.

Isaiah 58:13 "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, [from] doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking [thine own] words:"

“Turn away thy foot ... the Sabbath”:

The Sabbath was holy ground on which no one should walk.

Keeping the Sabbath was symbolic of obedience to all the Law of Moses (56:2).

For the setting aside of Sabbath law in the New Testament (see Romans 14:5-6; Col. 2:16-17).

Now, we see that the blessings of God will be upon Israel, if they obey God.

If they follow in His ways, He will bless them.

The promises made to Abraham which come down to them will be a blessing to them, if they will honor and respect God in all they do, all they say, and all they are in their hearts.

One day in seven belonged to God.

They must stop and remember Him on His day.

Sabbath helps man, as well as God.

But it also shows trust in God that He will keep His promises.

Isaiah 58:14 "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it]."

“Delight thyself in the LORD”:

Repentant people walking in fellowship with the LORD experience satisfaction of their soul (Psalm 37:4).

Their satisfaction will not come from material goods.

God had promised Abraham the land.

He had also promised to bless all the nations of the world through him, if he remained faithful to God.

His descendants had wandered away and gone after false gods, but God is renewing His pledge here.

He has forgiven them of the past errors, but they must be obedient to His Word and His ways.

Whenever God promises anything, He will do it.

He is not a man that He should lie.

God is Truth.

All He asks is that they love Him and delight in Him.

Again He says, if they keep His commandments, He will bless them.

The other side of this is, if they do not obey Him, curses will follow.

Isaiah Chapter 58 Questions

1. Verse 1 says lift up thy voice like a _____.
2. Who is speaking in verse 1?
3. What was Isaiah to do?
4. Why do preachers in our day need to sound the trumpet?
5. What is the job of a shepherd, or shepherdess?
6. It seems they had a form of _____.
7. What was wrong with their worship of God?
8. What did Jesus call this type person?
9. If God does not want ritualistic services, what does He want?
10. What was their fasting?
11. It was as if they were saying what to God?
12. What should true fasting be?
13. What does verse 4 say they fast for?
14. What is the answer to verse 5?
15. What is the fast God has chosen?
16. Love your neighbor, as _____.
17. We are to _____ the hungry, and _____ the naked.
18. What reveals to the world whether you are a Christian, or not?
19. What chapter and verse in James is saying the same thing as verse 9 here?

- 20 . Who gets their prayers answered?
- 21 . What causes the Light of God within you to become brighter and brighter?
- 22 . What does Psalm 37:25 say they have not seen?
- 23 . What must Israel do for God to restore them?
- 24 . What does keeping the Sabbath show?
- 25 . What promises had God made to Abraham that He renews in this lesson?