

## Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam, WI

August, 2022

*Isaiah 66:18-24*

1. *Does God hate the sinner, or does God love the sinner?*
2. *Will God destroy the evildoer, or will God forgive the evildoer?*
3. *Will God punish people in a place called hell, or will God bring people to a place called heaven?*

The answer to these questions is, (TaDa!) all the answers are correct! God hates sinners. God will send unbelievers to hell. Yet, at the very same time, God loves sinners. God forgives sinners for Jesus' sake. God will take all believers to heaven!

The last chapter of Isaiah shows God as holy and just, and at the same time, as being gracious and loving. Today we see that

### **God's glory is made known: in judgment and in grace.**

- *Isaiah foretold that the Babylonians would take the Jews into captivity.*
- *Isaiah foretold that Cyrus the Great would free the Jews to return to their homeland.*
- *Isaiah foretold that redemption would come to God's people by means of a Servant who would be born of a virgin and suffer for the sins of all people.*
- *Isaiah also foretold that this Suffering Servant would rise from the dead, accomplishing God's purpose of saving sinners from sin and death.*

But Isaiah reported that there were two reactions to what God promised. There were those people who believed God's promises, and then there were those who did not believe those promises and continued in their unbelief. God said this concerning unbelievers, They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations...when I spoke, no one listened.

They did evil in My sight and chose what displeases Me.

Those who reject Jesus as their Savior, those who will not listen

to or believe in His Word, would fall under God's judgment! Isaiah speaks in a way that combines both the punishment of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the world on the Last Day.

The truth for the people of the Old Testament and New Testaments is this: whoever does not believe that Jesus is their Savior will be condemned to hell. The unbelievers will feel the anger of God's judgment. Isaiah tells us that unbelievers will be repulsive to the believers: They will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against Me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.

People don't like to hear about hell, but hell is real. Those who don't want Jesus now will suffer in hell without Him forever. There will be no parole from hell's prison. The fire will never go out!

Isaiah was moved to write these words some 2,700 years ago; but these words are a warning for all people today. If Isaiah were to appear here now, he would say "Keep listening to God's Word. Keep believing in Jesus Christ. Don't turn away from your Savior. If you do, you will pay dearly forever!"

It's a fact: If people do not want to live with Jesus that is their choice. However, if people choose to live without the Lord in this life, they must also live without Him in the next life! Be careful and be faithful!

But God has shown His glory to us in another way. **Read v. 19.**

God is full of grace. Though the Jews deserved to have their country conquered and the temple destroyed, the Holy Spirit continued to work and some of God's OT people were believers who spread the news of the Savior.

- *The glory of the Lord was carried to those who had not heard it – the Gentiles.*

God's grace is for everyone. God's grace was given to a prostitute named Rahab. It was given to a murderer named Paul. It was given to a baby boy named Dennis Meier at his baptism. Read the book of Acts. Read how the Gentiles wanted to hear the good news. We have the privilege to carry the gospel to the world!

Salvation was, and is, for people who believe in Jesus! Isaiah gives us a peek into the future when he writes, As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me, so will your name and descendants endure...all mankind will come and bow down before Me.

God's grace will lead people to become believers in Christ. They will form the Christian Church. We will all be related through faith in Jesus. But if we take a peek into eternity, the church in the courtyard will become the church in heaven where we will praise our Lord forever.

All this happens because of God's grace. We cannot understand God's grace, but we are thankful for it!

And isn't it great that God's plan for the future includes using us to share God's grace? Mission prayers are important. Mission offerings are important. Mission work is important. I am so amazed that the Lord God is blessing our small synod with so many mission opportunities! It's amazing!

You know, there is a place called hell. It is real and it is horrible. Everyone who doesn't want Jesus as their Savior will be in hell. There will be no peace for the wicked there – ever!

There is a place called heaven. It is real and it is wonderful. Jesus, by His life, death, and resurrection has opened heaven for us! Salvation is ours! An eternal home!

God's grace is found in Jesus Christ. Isaiah spoke of our Savior's work, He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

That's GRACE!

God's judgment came on Jesus so that God's grace would come upon us. That's the glory of the gospel.

987