

A Message to the Remnant (Isaiah 66:1–14)

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Introduction

1. The final chapter of Isaiah presses the message of final judgment.
 - a. The immediate context is Israel's great impending calamity—the Divine judgment on those who falsely boasted loyalty to Yahweh's Name (Isaiah 66:4).
 - b. The pronouncement of judgment, however, extends beyond the captivity to the last days. This fact is evidenced by three things:
 - 1) The judgment was designed to restore righteous worship in God's chosen place, *Zion*: "*and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem*" (v. 13b).
 - 2) The judgment is characterized by fire, a symbol of thorough and complete cleansing and purging.
 - 3) The old order will then be replaced by new heavens and a new earth (vv. 15, 16; 2 Peter 3:10–13).
2. The prophet's message informed those who "*trembled at His word*," the faithful remnant of Yahweh's plans for them.
 - a. In the face of judgment, the Lord desired to encourage those who walked with God to endure. They, too, would share in the suffering, but to a different end (Isaiah 8:16, 17).
 - b. The marks of the righteous remnant are evident:
 - 1) They *trembled* at the Word of God because they lived in the fear of God.
 - 2) Their holy lives caused them to be disdained and excluded by their "brothers" who assumed spiritual leadership while living in sin and disobedience.
 - 3) Also implied was their endurance of these trials due to persevering grace's enabling them to trust the great promises of God so that they might not lose heart in the coming trials (Matthew 10:22; Philippians 2:12–13; Revelation 19:7, 8).

I. Patient Endurance

1. The holy remnant were hated and cast out for the sake of His name—suffering at the hands of those who claimed a kindred spiritual relationship (v. 5).
 - a. They were called "brothers" out of charity because they professed to be the true, faithful followers of Yahweh.
 - b. They were hypocrites as identified by their presumption of divine favor while they shamed the godly. The Lord promised that the shamers would themselves be shamed.
2. Isaiah revealed their hypocrisy in the words, "*Let Yahweh be glorified*" (v. 5), as if their devotion to outward religious practices proved Yahweh's favor, thus freeing them from all of Yahweh's threats.
 - a. Professing one thing but practicing another, covering up, lying, and justifying themselves is the currency of hypocrites. Hypocrites approve or disapprove everything according to their own whim and avoid consequences because of their superior numbers. They *see* the glory of God but in a way different from what they think.

b. The Lord, however, promises the remnant, “*He will be seen to your joy*”—the joy of the true believers (v. 5). Their suffering will be rewarded with true joy by the Lord so as to accomplish two things:

1) He exposes the hypocrites when the faithful, by holy living, shine the light of truth on a corrupt religious system ripe for judgment.

2) Suffering builds *perseverance* in the true believers because they learn to lean on the faithful Lord and rest in His glorious promises (Romans 5:2–5).

3. God has not threatened in vain, and the effects of His judgment were seen in all quarters (v. 6).

a. Wicked men may boast and obstinately establish their opposition to the judgments of God, but they cannot escape His hand, even from the temple.

b. Yet, when the voice of the terrified echoed from city and temple, the terror would not discourage the believing servants of God. Recompense was designed for His enemies alone.

II. Divine Desire

1. Often in Scripture the faithful are exhorted to *wait* for the Lord (Psalm 62:5).

We often become frustrated by the passing of time and the apparent failure of justice to reckon with prevailing evil. However, with sudden and brilliant revelation, the Lord announced His glorious plan: “*Before she travailed, she brought forth*” (v. 7).

2. Exposition of Isaiah 66:7–9

a. “*She*” refers to the dwelling place of God in every age called *Zion*—temple and church.

1) It is Zion who is identified as the woman giving birth. The woman does not give birth to Zion.

2) Zion is the dwelling place of God and is identified in the gospel age as the church (Hebrews 12:22). Observe that in the birthing, a son is first; then multiple sons are delivered. Jesus Christ is the son first birthed, and from Him a nation (the church) is brought forth. Revelation 12:1–6 supports this interpretation.

b. The Lord repeats references to the woman’s pain in childbirth—“*before she travailed*” and “*before her pain came*”—to demonstrate the miraculous nature of the birthing.

c. “*Who has heard of such a thing?*” (v. 8). This wonderful and unheard-of restoration will be regarded as the sole work of a sovereign God. John Calvin asked, “Shall not the Lord manifest Himself to be far more wonderful in enlarging and multiplying the Church, which is the principle theater of His glory?”

What Can We Take Away?

1. The means that the Lord uses to enlarge His church is the travail of His people.

Prayer, importunate and prevailing prayer, is required as per Christ’s instruction in Luke 18:1–8.

2. Perseverance and endurance are clear marks of true believers (Hebrews 12:1–4); however, Satan would love to discourage by wearing them out (Daniel 7:25). Is this not what he is doing today in the churches? Exodus 18:13, 17, 18). The same Hebrew term is used in Daniel 7:25.

What the Lord wants for His people is gloriously different: “*You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the Lord shall be known to his servants*” (Isaiah 66:14).