

“Alternate Endings” Isaiah 66:1-24

Context: God’s answer to the sinner’s question “Shall we be saved?” seems to use the backdrop of Ezra’s post-exilic Jerusalem to contrast the leitmotif of salvation and punishment that pervades Isaiah’s entire book. God’s transcendent, righteous, merciful, and loving nature juxtaposes the Remnant beside the rebellious in a grand finale. Isaiah ends his book by revealing alternate endings for each person’s eternal life depending upon their choice to accept or reject God’s invitation to salvation. It is a vision that primarily draws imagery from the ‘Millennial Age,’ which I interpret as the first age in the ‘Age of Ages.’ The Remnant’s ongoing struggles in the world conclude and their eternal reward in the Messiah’s newly created universe is contrasted with the eternal punishment of worshipers of self, haters of the Remnant, and haters of God,

Life Principle: The gift of thanks wrapped in the heart of awe reflects the presence of the Lord who gives meaning to both (cf. Isaiah 66:2).

1. Ending of the God-directed – Isaiah 66:2, 5, 7-14 21-24

The Lord is not contained by His creation; nor is His worship to be limited to its mere substance. Rather, He has chosen to illuminate the thoughts and passions of the broken in spirit to cause them to tremble at His awesome revelation, The Remnant, punished by the scoffing and shunning of the sanctimonious, is promised to be gathered as a nation that is reborn at Christ’s return. It is a culminating point that was begun and pointed toward in the past at Christ’s resurrection on Easter Sunday and His sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

2. Ending of the self-directed – Isaiah 66:3-4, 6, 15-20, 24

The Lord has chosen to reveal His awe to self-worshippers who ignore His calling and have willfully constructed their own self-impassioned rituals of worship. Their punishment of the Remnant becomes their own punishment of scorn and scoffing by the Lord. Their punishment begins at the return of Christ, is decided at the White Throne judgment, and is experienced eternally. The constant warning of eternal peril for the self-directed given in Isaiah 48:22 and 57:21 is described in Isaiah’s closing statement. He warns the unbelieving to avoid a self-inflicted everlasting, gnawing, burning torment. Selah!

Further study:

- Isaiah 66 has been interpreted by many Evangelicals as referring to the ‘Age of Ages’ and thus coming after the millennial reign of Christ on earth, Why does the observance of Sabbaths, Jewish Feast days, and continual viewing of corpses seem incompatible with chapter 66 being interpreted as happening after the Millennium (cf. Revelation 21:4, 8)? What impact does the forgetting of former things have on your hope and desire for the future?
- Isaiah 66: 7-9, 18-21 describes the Remnant’s liberation in terms of the birth of a nation. As a **Bible study method**, use your column references to determine who the boy is in verse 7, who the priests of the nation are in verse 21, and when the birth pangs come in verse 8 (i.e. Revelation 12:2-5; Matthew 24:8)? In light of your findings, when are the times that “the nation is born in a single day” (cf. Acts 1:25; 1 Peter 2:9; 1:3; Revelation 20:4-6)?
- Our doctrinal statement affirms our belief in Isaiah’s juxtaposition of salvation and eternal punishment (cf. footnotes 5-10 ‘**On Lasts Things**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org). Look up the word ‘peace’ used to describe the Remnant’s eternal state in Isaiah 66:12. Why does the use of ‘shalom’ (peace) convey hope to suffering believers longing for their home? How does verse 24 convey the lack of redemptive hope?

Transformation exercise:

Consider Isaiah 66:2, 12, 24. Are you choosing a future eternal state based upon a God-directed life or one that is self-directed?