

“Sabbath Rest: Just a Liddell Thing?”

Isaiah 56:1-8

Context: The concluding eleven chapters of Isaiah view the theme of salvation from a post-exilic perspective. Rewards for obedience and rebuke for sin are evident. The contrite heart that confesses sin is greeted by God’s merciful redemption. The presence of God’s Spirit upon the redeemed is described in terms of their future experience of glory and gladness, both flowing from a release out of their affliction. Their rebuilding of a devastated Jerusalem is symbolic of the coming of a New Jerusalem built by the hand of God; and so concludes Isaiah’s book. Struggles, hopes, sins, fears, confessions, forgiveness, and expectations of the returning Remnant all foreshadow the experiences of the Remnant in the Church age.

Life Principle: If you have joined yourself to the Lord, you are called to guard your heart from making His weekly “Sabbath Rest” a time for personal common pleasures as the pagans around you do.

1. Sabbath to live– Isaiah 56:1

Those accepting the invitation of salvation in the last chapter are urged to weigh their life circumstances in the balance of God’s law written on their hearts and in His word. After the weighing is done, they are exhorted to live accordingly. God explains why: He is about to uncover righteousness as the very nature expected to be growing within those who are about to be fully liberated from sin and delivered into His new Kingdom.

2. Sabbath to worship – Isaiah 56:2-8

The blessed outworking of God’s salvation in the post-exilic Remnant was symbolized in their discipline of being joyful Sabbath-keepers. In contrast to the pagan lifestyles about them, Sabbath-keepers set aside one day a week to focus on worshipping God, serving Him, loving His name, and causing themselves to firmly grasp His covenant. Anyone who has joined themselves to God in this way, irrespective of sin’s damage, was promised rest as a Sabbath-keeper and everlasting rest when the Lord actualizes the eternal Sabbath with the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Study questions:

- Isaiah 56:2 calls those blessed who do not profane the Sabbath. As a **Bible study method**, look up the meaning of the words ‘Sabbath’ and ‘profane.’ What are the two bases of “Sabbath Rest” and how do they relate to each other (cf. Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)? What does this symbolize in the Isaiah passage? How is it “made common/profane” (cf. Isaiah 58:13)?
- Isaiah’s use of Sabbath is eschatological, pointing to a time of progressive fulfillment of the Remnant’s rest which was inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and is completed by His reign in the age of ages (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:15-17; Revelation 1:10ff; 21:4ff). Did either Jesus or Paul teach us to “make common/profane” the Sabbath (cp. Matthew 12:1-13; Colossians 2:13-16; Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 13:10-16; 14:1-4; John 5:1-23; 7:14-24; 9:14; 19:31; Hebrews 4:9)?
- In Isaiah 56:2-7, the word Sabbath is used in the context of the salvation of the foreigner. Our doctrinal statement describes God’s part and our part in salvation (see footnotes 11-16 ‘**On Salvation**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org). What do ‘keeping a Sabbath Rest holy’ and ‘making it a delight’ have to do with the four aspects of salvation in your life?

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Isaiah 56:2 and 58:13-14. Do you take seriously the Lord’s Sabbath Rest or is it just another common day off filled with the worship that the pagans celebrate? Study the questions for this week and begin preparing to “take hold of/commit to” a different opportunity to experience His life-changing Sabbath Rest in your life.