

Isaiah 56 – 58

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Chapters 1-37 dealt with the times of Isaiah himself and the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Often in those chapters we are given the setting Isaiah wrote about. When Christ is mentioned, it is in the context of his being the King, the Son of David, whose throne and dynasty God was committed to preserve and enlarge.

In **chapters 38-55** there is attention to a time well after Isaiah's death, the time of the Babylonian captivity and deliverance from it. The Holy Spirit used that situation to speak about a greater Deliverer than Cyrus, the Lord Jesus, the Servant of the Lord, who delivers from sin. The Lord is committed to the total success of the mission of the Servant.

Now in **chapters 56-66** we return, in a sense, back into the daily life of the people before the coming of Christ; Isaiah never mentions any time frame. The great work of the Servant has been told; there is still more for Christ to do in bringing the life of his people and the lives of his enemies to their final and appropriate end. Since Isaiah speaks this way, the time in view extends to our own day, right up to the Second Coming of Christ. God is still doing his work through Christ who appears in this section as the Anointed One (61:1), a text Jesus applied to his time and ministry. Yet, as is typical in prophecy (66:20), the issues and events are framed in a setting familiar to those living in the prophet's time. The moral issues and the competing tensions of different ways of life among people living in the same space, is similar to our day. We too see great evil in the world, false profession in the church, and great failure by Christians. We see the need for his salvation in us to be finished – not in atoning for our sin, but that righteousness should replace sin in us. We see a need for evil in the world to be put down with finality. In the end, God's saving grace on his people will be their joyful experience, while those who would not listen to his Word will live on in hell under his relentless wrath (66:24). This final major section of Isaiah opens and ends with the issue of the Sabbath. By keeping it, men show respect for the Lord against the prevailing pressure of the world in the use of a day God claims as his.

Isaiah 56:1-8 Here is a statement of great beauty and encouragement. The chapter opens with an exhortation to righteousness, yet this godly life occurs in an environment of wickedness. In 55:1, God invited the world to dinner; here in v.3, he extends a universal invitation to membership in the people of God.

56:1 On the cross of Christ the penalty for the guilt of our sin was fully discharged. There is nothing to add to that. Sin in our world and in our lives is still present, so a call to righteousness is given. The Lord comforts us that this is not a situation that will continue as it now is forever. His salvation will be revealed (Romans 13:11-14). He will clean up the world and us as well (Philippians 1:6).

56:2 Meanwhile, those who do right are promised blessing. The chief issue of obedience in this passage is the Sabbath, a subject that is mentioned in chapters 56, 58 & 66. To live a life of six days of work and one of rest would differ noticeably with the practice of the ungodly. It would mark the righteous out as separate from worldly life, because the Sabbath would be kept out of respect for God who commanded it. An unbeliever might not steal and he might be faithful to one woman, but only one who believes in the Lord would keep one day every week for him.

56:3 Contrary to the expectations of Jews, the Lord has a wide door for inclusion among his people (14:1). The foreigner is welcome, so is the eunuch. In the gospel there is no ethnic barrier, nor one for a person who is less than normal. Foreigners are part of the “many” of 53:11, 12 and the reason for the larger tent in 54:2, 3.

56:4-7 These newcomers are welcome, but the welcome is into a life of obedience. Gentiles join themselves to the Lord, just as we read in 14:1 of them joining Israel. They too must keep God’s Sabbaths, and all the rest of God’s commandments, as part of their corporate life in covenant with the holy Lord and in union with those who are his (Matthew 5:17-20; 7:24-27). This text does not envision that we may join one or the other, but both the Lord *and* his people. Isaiah never indicates that anyone is declared righteous by the Lord on the basis of their obedience, but he never relents in teaching that those who are the Lord’s must be righteous in conduct. Godly conduct has its rewards from God. The eunuch, without children of his own, will have a name better than having children. The foreigner will have the joy of access to God in prayer and worship. He too comes by sacrifice for acceptance. Isaiah teaches justification in the righteousness of Christ in 53:11, and here in 56 teaches of righteousness in their conduct. Righteousness given (53:11) results in righteousness lived (56:1).

56:7, 8 To show the universal nature of salvation, the Lord calls his house, a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17), just as Solomon prayed in 1 Kings 8:41-43. Blessing to all peoples on earth through Abraham (Genesis 12:3) is coming closer. It is the Lord who is active in fulfilling his Word to Israel and the nations (49:5). The gathering is no longer out of the grip of a nation like Babylon; it is a gathering from sin unto salvation – not a trek back to the land of Israel but to the Lord. It is a gathering that includes the Gentiles (John 10:16).

The Sabbath God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Genesis 2:2). He sanctified that day and required that people made in his image, should remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. God was not *instituting* the Sabbath when he gave the law to Moses; he simply referred to something that had existed from the beginning of human life (Genesis 2:3). In Exodus 20:8-11 the commandment concerning the Sabbath was connected to creation, and in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 to redemption from Egypt. It was to be a rest and a cessation from work. This pictures the salvation we have when we cease from our own work and enter into the rest of God’s finished work in Christ (Hebrews 4:9-11). It is thus no surprise that Christians after the Resurrection of Christ met for worship on the Lord’s Day (Revelation 1:10; Acts 20:7). In 58:13, the Sabbath is called “*the Lord’s holy day*”. Rather than abolishing the Sabbath, the Lord Jesus reminded us that he did not come to abolish the law, and that he is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27,28), a day set apart as his, and for the rest man needs.

In the old covenant, the rest came at the end of man’s six days of work. In a sense he had earned it. In the new covenant, the rest comes at the outset of the week. It is a gift with which we begin. In the covenant of works man by obedience, i.e., a sinless man, would gain the rest on his own. In the covenant of grace we cannot earn any benefit, so the Sabbath is graciously given as our starting point.

56:9-12 Next, Isaiah 56 reveals the ugliness of sin among Israel’s leaders. They were to be like watchmen and watchdogs, both of which have the duty to warn and protect. They, instead, were blind to see, and like dogs that did not bark when needed, they were silent when warning was needed. Spiritual leaders are to exercise proactive oversight. In chapter 56 the leaders cared nothing for their people; they only wanted to indulge themselves. They turned to their own way (53:6). The words for “they do not know” in vv.10, 11 appear four times in the Hebrew language. Among the people of God, when men have positions of influence yet lack

discernment, trouble gets in among the Lord's people. The short section ends with a feast of alcohol and carelessness. But it also opened with a feast, one in which the dogs shall devour them. (Note how often dogs drank the blood of wicked people in 1 Kings 14, 16, 21, 22). This picture of debauchery is part of the environment the people of God had to live in in the days of Isaiah and very often in the history of the church since. In 56:1 God promised "My righteousness will soon be revealed," so his people will not suffer such miserable conditions for long.

Isaiah 57 The previous chapter showed the corruption of Israel's leaders. For many it must have been very hard to believe that God the holy Lord was going to accomplish his purposes on earth through the line of David when some of the kings were so extremely wicked. King Manasseh, who succeeded Hezekiah, was so wicked he sacrificed his sons to an idol (2 Chronicles 33:6). After addressing sin in high places in chapter 56, Isaiah turns to ordinary people. It is a dismal scene of sorcery, idols and callousness to God. There are two peoples here, the righteous (vv. 1, 2, 13-19) and the wicked (vv. 3-13, 20, 21). It is just like our time; we too live in a world where godly and godless people live together. And like our time, they had exceptional promises of what God would one day do through his Servant. They awaited the coming of Christ, and though he has come and fulfilled so much of Isaiah 53, we too await his coming. Meanwhile we live in trying times; comforted by his words and promises (12:1-3) we will trust and not be afraid, amazed at the promise of fellowship the Lord (57:15). Isaiah 57 opens with peace for the righteous and ends with no peace for the wicked (typical of the kind of literary arrangement Isaiah has used throughout his prophecy).

57:1-2 There is peace for the righteous. Knowing the great trouble they face in the world, God sometimes uses death to spare them from more evil. They have peace in their souls in dying, peace in their graves awaiting the resurrection, and great pleasure in the presence of Christ in the meantime (Philippians 1:21-23; Hebrews 11:39, 40). This is truth man is unable to realize (v.1); only those who believe his word are comforted. (This verse could be the origin of the famous *RIP*, 'rest in peace'.)

57:3-5 To show a major switch from the righteous to the wicked, v.3 opens with a strong "But you"! This shows also that the prophet is preaching; his word is not merely giving information. He challenges his people as in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The Hebrew language has gender in second and third person verbs; vv.3-5 which are addressed to men plural. From v.6 to part of v.13, women are addressed – i.e., first the offspring, then the mother.

The sneering (v.4) shows hostility to the Lord. They broke covenant and pursued the gods of their neighbors. (See Deuteronomy 4:25-31; 6:13-19.) They spurned the Lord their God (1:4). The marriage bed (see also vv.7, 8) is a figure used to describe vividly the illicit religious union of spiritual adultery (Jeremiah 3:6-9; Ezekiel 23:36-39). Not having an active, loving, prayerful, obedient worship of the Lord, opened the door to other attractions – other gods. That resulted in such abominations as burning their children to false gods. It is the nature of sin to enslave (Romans 6:16-20) and destroy (James 1:13-15). The lust for false gods consumes the one who worships them, while the worship of the true God transforms into his moral likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). So far in chapter 57, Isaiah has drawn a sharp difference

between those who walk uprightly under God's Spirit, and "sons of a sorceress" who come under the control of evil spirits. (See Proverbs 4:18, 19).

Fertility cults The Israelites were to destroy both the Canaanites and their gods when they entered the land the Lord was giving them (Deuteronomy 7:1-6). These gods were fertility gods: male Baals and female Ashtoreths (Judges 2:10-13). The Lord promised rain and crops (Deuteronomy 11:8-17; Leviticus 26:4), but their neighbors said these blessings came from *their* gods. Note the response to this error in Psalm 135: 5-7: *For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.* (See also Psalm 68:7-10; 65:9-13 & 144:11-15.)

King Jeroboam of Israel had goat and calf idols (2 Chronicles 11:13-15), because of his interest in the fertility of animals that produce their milk and cheese. Since the worship of local idols often had reproduction as a goal, there were shrine prostitutes (1 Kings 14:22-24; Hosea 4:14; Micah 1:7) available in the gardens of these cults (1:29). Sexual activity, evident in 57:7, 8, was meant, like pornography, to stir the gods to similar activity, and thereby enabling animals to conceive, rains to come, and fields to flourish. When the real God gave rain and crops, people brought to idols gifts from their harvests, and even their children to be sacrificed to these gods in thanksgiving. Heathen worship was designed by Satan (1 John 5:19) to be in some ways parallel to, and in gross competition with and rejection of the worship of the Lord God of Israel. The first commandment is greatly needed, "You shall have no other gods before me." (See 1 John 5:21.)

The sexual activity, combined with music, dancing, feasting, and alcohol was a powerfully seductive combination meant to lure human participation and to charm life from the gods. The sacrifice of babies was to allay the appetite for death in these cruel masters, so the lives of those making such offerings might be spared. The entire system was an insidious attack on God's role as creator and provider. In our day, God's true role as Creator and Sustainer of all is challenged in the name of science by atheistic explanations that give credit for our existence to completely impersonal notions such as evolution, and such abstract non-forces as chance and time. (Neither chance nor time, as the abstractions they are, does anything to anything – just as the word "inch" cannot move anything by as much as an inch!) Today's god of *natural selection* is an anti-supernatural replacement for our Lord's wise, purposeful, and intelligent creation. We are not as tempted in many cultures today to bow down to gods of stone, but the same attributes of God are under attack now as in ancient times. Heathen religions promoted promiscuous lust, but our Holy Lord models and demands covenanted faithfulness (2 Peter 1:3, 4)

57:6, 7 The idols were from the valleys to the tops of hills, a way of saying they were everywhere. Sacrificing to them was giving idols the thanks due to God. The Lord makes clear that he knows this is happening and will respond. A bed on a hilltop open to observation shows how blatant their activity was.

57:8-10 God's commandments were to be written on the frames of their doors (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Probably v.8 indicates that these were removed and hidden as those commandments were being broken. Making an alliance with heathen nations is likened to being in bed with those nations, a way to say that covenants with them rather than the Lord was adulterous in nature. As a prostitute looks to gain, God's people hoped for a benefit from their dealings with nations whose armies could bring them protection. They felt this was worth leaving their God. They sent their ambassadors to other nations, and the prostitute's

perfume (v.9) was to win the favors of kings. (See 28:14, 15). It would not succeed; all they did would wear themselves out, but they would not admit the truth.

57:11-13 Reaching for other helpers was a rejection of the Lord. They dreaded nations which in the Lord's sight are as nothing (40:15-17). This is what happens when the knowledge of God fades in the mind; people will fear the power they know rather than the Lord they do not. We are to be careful what we fear (8:11-13). The Lord said he would expose them and what they were doing (v.12). Judgment was coming, and in that day their idols and alliances would be no help. They had taken refuge in weakness rather than in the Lord their God. (This connects to previous texts about the Lord being a shelter: 4:6, 32:2, and 25:4.) The idolaters are gone, and shall never walk again on the land they loved, while the meek of Isaiah's day, resting in their graves (v.2), will live again to inherit the earth (Job 19:25,26; Matthew 5:5; Romans 4:13).

57:13 Isaiah speaks again of the righteous (vv.1, 2). The godly man lives by faith in the Lord (Habakkuk 2:4). He will inherit the land. To preserve their land, the unfaithful turned to heathen nations (vv.8-10), hoping by that kind of "help" to remain in it. It had the opposite effect, because that land was the gift of God (Deuteronomy 4:1, 2), and could only be enjoyed in recognition of the Lord. The man who makes the Lord his trust will even be allowed to approach God's holy mountain, the place of his temple and presence. The righteous were not sinless, but they could approach God by sacrifice at his temple. God is approachable through Christ only; (Hebrews 10:19-25).

57:14 The righteous may lie in death, but a highway is being *built* for them to come home to the Lord to live with him in his presence (35:8-10). The theme of gathering in 56:8 is repeated. Jesus prayed that his own would be with him (John 17:24). There will be no obstacles; nothing can stop their homeward journey.

57:15 While heathen practice happened on a high hill (v.7), God, who lives in a very high and holy place, speaks of living with his people who repent.

The Presence of God The Bible, as in 57:15, speaks of the communion of God's presence among his people in two major ways:

a.) Current fellowship with him – his presence with us. Christ promises to be with his people now in their ministry (Matthew 28:20). The Holy Spirit is in his people (1 Corinthians 6:19). Not only is the Spirit with God's people (John 14:17), the Father and Son make their home with those who love and obey (John 14:21, 23). He will never forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). We have access to him in prayer (Hebrews 4:16). Yet this is not the same as God walking with Adam prior to his sin. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, God was among his people, yet they could not enter his presence.

b.) Final, complete, salvation/glorification – living in his presence. Those who die in Christ are present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). Face-to-face unbroken communion can only come when salvation is complete and all sin is removed from our lives at the Second Coming (1 John 3:2). Then the dwelling of God will be with men on earth, the kind of fellowship Adam once had, which is not possible till all sin is forever gone from us (Revelation 21, 22).

God speaks of himself as lofty, the same word in 6:1 and of Christ in 52:13. This means God is transcendent. This was said of his thoughts in 55:9. He is transcendent in what he is, which

puts understanding of such a God out of our reach. We are left with the great privilege to learn of him, but only as he chooses to reveal himself. Beyond this we cannot go and must not try. Our sinful hearts will assume he is like us, which is a violation of the second commandment. We were made in his image, not he in ours. Inventing a god one prefers is the essence of every heathen religion. God is not a man (Numbers 23:19). It amazed the Psalmist that God, whose glory is above the heavens, would be mindful of man (Psalm 8). Psalm 113 is remarkably like 57:15. It tells us God must stoop down just to view the heavens, let alone the earth. Yet he says in 57:15 that he is with the downtrodden. He is able to revive the lowly; the point here is that he wills to do so gladly. God cannot change his moral character (Titus 1:2), so how can he fellowship with sinful man?

57:16 The Lord explains his condescension with a statement of mystery. The same Lord, who does not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:7), whose eyes are too pure to look on evil (Habakkuk 1:13) has found a way not to accuse a sinner, even though he is the Judge of all the earth (Genesis 18:25)! This amazing situation should make us wonder how this can be. Some things are forensic, and we cannot understand salvation apart from seeing this aspect of it. God does not accuse us sinners he has forgiven, not because we are without sin, but because Jesus has taken the accusation of our sin and its penalty. Because of this grace for us, God can continue his love to us.

God justly accuses because sin is real; he is angry because it is an offense to his holiness. Yet he can see with compassion how helpless we are in our sin and have mercy on us. His forbearance concerning the sin of his people in Isaiah's day was based entirely on the certainty of the sacrifice Christ would later make for them (Romans 3:25, 26). God saw that man receiving what his sins deserved would be crushed under the load of his wrath. He had not created man to be destroyed but to fellowship with the high and lofty One, thus God would act to restore the fellowship man lost.

57:17-19 The sin and resulting wrath against greed were reality. Temporal punishment followed, a foretaste of the ultimate eternal banishment from the presence of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9). God punished, but like those punished in Revelation 16, punishment alone does not change man's heart; only a new birth does that (1 Peter 1:3). Here we find God's desire to do the opposite of expelling from the Garden (Genesis 3:23, 24). He would have fellowship with sinful man by changing the man. This is what baptism signifies; the sinner must be cleansed in the washing of a new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-7). This is what the Lord is speaking about in Isaiah 57, the man, *on his own*, continues in his sin. But God *on his own* (John 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:25) heals, directs into a new life, and restores comfort. Reconciliation is the comfort and peace of sins forgiven.

A response in man is necessary. In Hosea 14:1, 2 the prophet told Israel to return to the Lord taking with them words of repentance. *In Isaiah 57, the Lord creates on the lips of his people the right words to say.* In a reversal of Matthew 15:18, their mouths spoke to God from changed hearts. So the horror of 29:13 is also reversed; a heart no longer far from God comes near to him saying the right things sincerely. That God so loved the world that he gave his Son is the foundation (John 3:16); that God so loved the rebels he intended to save, that he gave them new hearts (Jeremiah 24:4-7) is a truth that sits on that foundation.

God announces peace, peace. In 53:5, peace is based on the piercing of Christ. For his elect, God has put his spear away. He completes reconciliation by creating a response in his own one by one. ("I will heal *him*" in v.19 is singular. The NIV should not make it plural.) "Far

and near” shows it is for Jews and Gentiles – for as many as the Lord will call (Acts 2:39; Ephesians 2:13-17).

57:20, 21 The wicked are simply those God has left alone in their sin, those who keep on in the ways of their unchanged hearts (v.17). They are not what they were created to be. God who is holy has left them in their sin (John 8:21) so there is for them neither peace with God nor peace within. They are like the sea churning up mud (48:22). God does not draw near to them; he has left them alone. The kindest thing God does for a sinner is to intervene in his life though unbeckoned, drawing him to Christ, breaking his will to rebel, and making him bow down in repentance and faith to be saved (Romans 11:22; Ephesians 2:7-9). God delivers his salvation by powerfully subduing sinners to his gracious and beneficial rule. Then the former enemy has peace with God (Romans 5:1) and joy in his Lord (56:7).

Isaiah 58

God had promised his repentant people that he would guide them (57:18). The law of God was given to show what sin is, to show our need of Christ since we have broken his law, and to guide our lives into understanding his will. Thus Isaiah preaches again on ethical issues very similar to 1:10-20. Isaiah 57 taught that God creates repentance. Here in 58 we see how: the Word proclaimed to the ear is the outward means (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23-25) and the Spirit at work in the heart is the inward means (John 16:7-11). The law calls for repentance for violating God’s laws, and the gospel calls for faith in God’s promises.

The issue of the Sabbath is back, a symbol of a life devoted to the Lord. Possibly Israelites had turned it into a day of fasting, though the Lord had not commanded this except for the annual Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:31). If the prophet is not saying how they abused the Sabbath – and God said he hated their Sabbaths (1:13) – he does at least address their days of fasting and then shows how the Sabbath should be used. The chapter moves from perverted days of fasting to two main things: a.) the proper treatment of their neighbors, and b.) the Sabbath day as the Lord intended, a delight in contrast to the misery of their days of fasting. God hates brutality; he is sharp in condemnation of social sins linked to religious practices designed to impress him (Matthew 6:16-18). In typical fashion, the section opens and closes with a voice: like a trumpet in v.1, and the mouth of the Lord speaking in v.14 (see 1:20).

58:1 The prophet was to cry out with authority against rebellion in the house of Jacob. The reference to Jacob implies their covenantal heritage. This section ends in v.14 with the inheritance that God promised Jacob’s descendents.

58:2-3 Their religious activity was pretense, the appearance of godliness (2Timothy 3:1-5). They complain to God that their efforts do not seem to move him as they felt he should respond (v.3). This shows they were thinking like Canaanites, whose religious activity was designed to move the gods to respond (1Kings 18:25-29). The true religion of the real God is that he will always keep his Word without human inducement to do so. He commands and his people must respond. (Note the prologue of the law in Exodus 20:1, 2.)

58:3-5 Sinners are incapable of producing godliness. They can only create false appearances. Their days of fasting are similar to the activity described in Colossians 2:20-23. Hearts without the fruit of the Spirit will erupt in animosity, thus the quarreling and fighting. Anyone can wear sackcloth and sit on ashes without being godly. Isaiah says they bow “like a reed”. A reed does not know God, so when it bends over, it is not an act of devotion to the Lord. The exploitation of workers is not specific here. Other prophets tell of wages not paid (Jeremiah 22:13). Since Isaiah will soon speak of the Sabbath again, he might have in mind a

situation where the boss man goes off in some religious activity while his workers lack the day of rest that God commanded should be given even to animals (Exodus 20:8). The religious design was to impress God, but their kind of fasting revealed how ungodly they were. They should not expect their voice to be heard on high!

58:6-12 True denial – for fasting is a denial of self – involves the unselfish service of others. Isaiah does not treat fasting as merely abstaining from eating, an activity all desire and need. He points to specific things where unselfish, God-honoring practices are needed. One example uses the language of chains, cords, and yokes. He pleads for people to be set free from bondage. It was in the power of these ostensible God-worshippers to do this, but it would be at some cost to themselves. They should provide food, shelter, and clothing to the needy and natural affection for their families. Relieving oppression is repeated in v.9 with ceasing from doing harm with words. Isaiah then increases his appeal. It is not enough to feed the hungry as the occasion arises; they ought to spend themselves on such a venture. They were so busy extracting every bit of gain they could acquire, that the prophet calls for that same kind of zeal in reverse. Note the high profile given to greed in 57:17. This chapter calls for the repentance mentioned there. Isaiah is calling for a conversion like that of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8.

58:8-10 The Lord promises blessing for obedience. They sought blessing on their terms, now God tells what good they may have on his terms. Benefits would “break out” in abundance: healing of what is abnormal; their righteousness would be genuine, not contrived; they would have the Lord in all his glory as their guardian. Sinners try to manipulate God; now he promises to answer the prayers of the righteous. He is responsive to the obedient. Light will replace their confusion; God will meet their needs in difficult times and strengthen them. Earlier their greed and oppression had prosperity as a motive; now the Lord says he is the One who will make them like a well-watered garden. Old losses, such as the destruction of their cities in 1:7 would be reversed; the nation would be rebuilt and they would live in safety. All this is promised if they would treat their neighbors well. The word ‘love’ is not used, but what God required was the love commanded in Leviticus 19:18.

58:13,14 After showing the need to love their neighbor in connection with the abuse of a day of fasting, Isaiah turns to the love of God in relation to the day he claims as his own – the day he sanctified and commands us to honor. The Sabbath is mentioned here in the context of blessing. Those criticized earlier in the chapter had erected, on their own authority, a day of fasting; they imposed on themselves a melancholy day in which it would be impossible to have any joy and delight. What God had for their spiritual advancement was a day of delight! It should thus be protected from abuse, from ordinary labor, such as their feet heading off to the drudgery of a seventh day of work that week. The Lord their Creator Redeemer should be their joy. If life went on as usual every day, they would lose this opportunity. In time the Sabbath would become the day when brothers and sisters gather in happy fellowship to worship the Lord. It was to be a day of delight. Thus they should not succumb to injecting whatever they please into this one day a week to compete with the Sabbath. Obedience was again encouraged. The ugly fast of the wicked would be replaced by feasts in which the righteous enjoy the gifts of the Lord. They would ride high on the heights of the land promised to their fathers, and secured by the Lord its Guardian. They would be a people not worn out, on land not worn out, a people not ignorant of their God and his creation, but enjoying their place as his obedient covenant people.