

Isaiah 54 - 56 • "My steadfast love shall not depart from you."

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Let's get into some Isaiah tonight, wonderful prophecies. We're in the 54th chapter of Isaiah as we continue our study through this wonderful prophetic Book.

As we get into these chapters, I want to remind you that the Lord has been speaking prophetically of a time in Israel's future when they will be taken off into exile into the Babylonian kingdom. God is already speaking to them about after that time and when He will regather them to the nation of Israel once again, to their own homeland.

But we've also been making the point throughout the course of these chapters that while these prophecies have to do with the regathering of Israel in the short term, they also have a long term fulfillment and that is with the Millennial Kingdom. And so the regathering of Israel after the Babylonian Empire is a foreshadowing of a time that is still yet to come when Christ returns to the earth, establishes His kingdom in Israel, in Jerusalem, on Mount Zion and rules and reigns there for a period of 1,000 years.

I know it sounds crazy, but that's what the Bible tells us is going to happen and there's going to be a final regathering during that time, and a final work of blessing and we'll talk more about this as we kind of get into these verses.

But the reason that we know that the majority of these prophecies extend into the Millennial Kingdom is because they speak of a blessing on Israel and a scale of blessing that far exceeds anything we've seen up to this point.

God has blessed Israel in many ways throughout the course of human history, but the kind of blessings that Israel will experience during the Millennial Kingdom will far outseed them all. And what we're reading in these verses are blessings that go beyond anything we've seen and so we know that they are yet future. So as we get into..., we're going to try to get through 3 chapters tonight. We'll see how it goes, so we better pray.

Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to the ministry of your Word this evening. We pray for your Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us and speak to us. You are the teacher, you are the counselor.

Lord, your children come before you seeking the wisdom of your counsel, seeking to know you better, to know how you work among your people. We pray that you would give us that kind of insight, that you would nourish us tonight from our study of the Scriptures and fill us with peace. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen. Amen.

Isaiah chapter 54 begins this way, *“Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the LORD.*” (ESV)

Let me stop you there for just a moment and explain what God is saying. Because in Middle Eastern thought and you have to be keyed into Middle Eastern thought to make sense of this first verse here. It was considered a very disgraceful thing for a woman to be barren. If a woman was married and she was not having children, she was considered to be under a curse, the curse of God.

And there must have been something going on in her past, or something that was causing her to be unable to bear children and it's very unfortunate that was the position they took. But God knew it and He is now likening the nation of Israel as a whole to the kind of image that Israel would have of a barren woman, and He's essentially likening that to the people.

And it's important for you to know something, it was God's intention by calling forth the nation of Israel to make them a fruitful nation, not just for themselves, but for all the kingdoms of the world. God wanted Israel to bless the world, He wanted them to bear fruit for the world, He wanted them to speak to the world and bring life through the Word of God. Unfortunately, that never happened.

Instead of bearing fruit for the world, Israel became legalistic and judgmental of anyone outside of their own realm, and that became the predominant attitude by the time Jesus arrived on the scene. They were so legalistic and so critical of all people that Jesus was constantly tangling with the religious leaders and other Jews. But you have to understand that one day, and that's again during the Millennial Kingdom, it has really not happened yet. But one day, God is going to touch Israel in such a way that it is going to fulfill His original plan for Israel as a nation and that is to be a mother to the nations.

He intended it to happen in the first place, it didn't and so during the Millennial Kingdom, Israel will be that mother to the nations. And that's why the Lord is speaking now to her prophetically and saying, you can now sing, O barren woman. You've been barren, you have not given birth as I intended you spiritually to give birth to life in the world and among the nations. But now sing because the "*children of the desolate one,*" meaning Israel, are going to be more than the children of the woman who was married and had given birth to children.

He goes on now in verse 2 to say, because of this now, "*Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords (He says) and strengthen your stakes.*"

And the people in that culture, many of the people who lived out and shepherded their flocks, lived in tents so they could follow their flocks wherever they needed to take them. And I don't know if you knew this, but the women often lived in tents that were separate from the men. And that helps us to understand how Isaiah is speaking here and describing Jerusalem as a barren wife who lived alone in her own tent.

Look what He goes on to say in verse 3, He says it. He says, "*For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.*" So He announces here that they need to enlarge themselves to take in all the people that will come.

And He says in verse 4, "*Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced;...*" Those two words, ashamed and disgraced, exactly describe a barren woman in Israel. But He says, you'll no longer be ashamed, you'll no longer be disgraced.

He goes on to say, "⁴*...for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.* ⁵*For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.* ⁶*For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.*"

Now, this is interesting language because God speaks to the nation of Israel and He calls her back and says, I call you back to be my wife, but I'm speaking to you as a wife deserted and grieved. Now, I don't know if you remember back in Isaiah chapter 50, but God actually said at that time that He never gave Israel a certificate of divorce. Do you remember He asked him the question? He said,

show me the certificate of divorce, you can't do it because I never actually gave it to you.

And so the picture here is rather of a wife who's been deserted because of their sin, right? But now God says, I am redeeming you, I'm bringing you back as my wife and the picture is really a very beautiful one when you stop and think about it.

The fact that God is restoring Israel to that place, that very special place. Not only is it beautiful for the nation of Israel, but I happen to know many women who have taken hold of these very passages for themselves because of a wife who, or a husband rather, who rejected them or left them behind even in death. And it's an incredible comfort to hear the Lord of the universe speak tenderly to a woman and say, your maker is your husband, your maker is your husband.

I've talked to many women who have grieved over the loss of a marriage or the loss of a husband in death or whatever. Grieved over that and wondered how in the world they were ever going to make it and the Lord spoke to them through this very passage and said, I am your husband, I'm going to take care of you. I'm going to see you through, don't you worry for a minute.

The Lord continues on speaking to Israel in verse 7, saying, *“For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. ⁸ In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD, your Redeemer.*”

And of course, that brief moment, that the Lord is speaking of there, most likely refers to the 70 year exile of Israel to the Babylonian Empire. But the Lord says, when I bring you back, ultimately there will be a never ending work of compassion.

So God says in verse 9, *“This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you. ¹⁰ For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, (and we know that they will actually at some point when the Lord returns) but (He says) my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*”

So the Lord says, just as I swore in the days of Noah, and I said, no, never again will the waters cover the whole earth and wipe out life upon the earth, so also

I've sworn to you now that I will pour out my compassion upon you. And the Lord says, I'm going to keep my promise.

So He goes on to say in verse 11, *“O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, (and antimony is a silvery white metal, He says) and lay your foundations with sapphires. ¹² I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of precious stones.”*

We read about this in other passages, prophetic passages in the Bible about how Jerusalem will be adorned on that day and this is kind of a vision of the renewed city, filled with peace and righteousness and so forth.

And He says in verse 13, *“All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.”* You know why? Because the Prince of Peace will be reigning on that day. Once again, I'm thankful that politicians try to bring peace into the Middle East, I'm thankful when they attempt to do that.

This latest work by our President of the Abraham Accords, it's a good thing. I always appreciate... But it's never going to be fully realized until the Prince of Peace rules and reigns on the throne of Zion and that is Jesus. And that's why the Lord says here, *“great shall be the peace of your children.”*

Verse 14, *“In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror,...”* Boy, has Israel had to deal with terror over the years? I mean they still do but He says on that day, you'll be far from it. He says, *“¹⁴...for it shall not come near you.”* No terror in the land.

He says, *“¹⁵ If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you.”* Because you are in the land and you are my special people, but the Lord says it's not going to be my doing.

Verse 16, *“Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals (that's the blacksmith) and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy;”*

But now He says, for you, *“¹⁷ no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. ...”* So you have to ask yourself the question, is that something that the Lord spoke only to Israel? That no weapon forged against you shall succeed and so

forth and so on? Look what the Lord ends this chapter with by saying, He says, “¹⁷...*This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD...*” And we are the servants of the Lord today as the church, we are not Israel. We never will be Israel, but we are the servants of the Lord.

We are the bride of Christ, which is separate by the way from Israel. But we are the servants of the Lord and God says, “¹⁷...*This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares (YAHWEH, declares) the LORD.*”

Chapter 55. I love chapter 55, it's so beautiful because in it God calls people to come and partake of the delicacies and He kind of illustrates this with like a banquet sort of arrangement.

He says in verse 1, “*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*”

Well, that sounds like a good deal. In fact, He goes on to ask the question, “² *Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?*” Alright, stop there.

First of all, God invites people to come and He says, come and buy, but He says, it won't cost you anything. In other words, it's free. So you come to the Lord's table and you eat for free. The bread of life, the water of life, it is yours and it will satisfy.

But then God asked the question in verse 2, “*Why do you spend your money?*” In other words, what you have, your resources, your effort, your time, your energy, why do you spend your life on things that aren't going to satisfy?

Oh man, I tell you, it's just, well, actually we know the answer to this question. He asks it essentially as a rhetorical question, but we know the answer. We know that we were created to worship God, we were created to have a relationship with God. There's the problem though, we're born separated from God. We're born cut off and we don't have that relationship when we are first born as children and as we grow into adults, we don't have it.

We have to gain it by repentance and putting our faith in God through Jesus Christ. But until we come to that place of repentance, there's this aching vacuum inside of us that's just longing to be filled with purpose and satisfaction. We're looking for purpose and some people try to find it in political reform and some

people try to find it in their job career. Some people try to find it in money making and some try to just seek pleasure but they're all trying to do the same thing and that is fill that empty vacuum in their heart.

And there's all kinds of things that we'll try to do, and if we can't fulfill it, we'll try to just drown it out. There's this voice inside of us that just knows that we're empty, we don't usually admit it, but we know that we're empty. And so we turn to alcohol and drugs, or, any number of things that people can turn to, to try to silence that cry of the heart that says, I'm empty, it's empty.

We see so many testimonies from people who come to Christ after looking for satisfaction and meaning in life all over the place. And people who have actually tried to fill that void with money, things, cars, houses, wives, husbands, whatever the situation may call for or whatever they seem to want to, or need to have at the moment to try to fill that void.

And what do they say when they finally come to Christ? They'll say, I did this, I did this, I did this, I did this, and I was still empty. There was an emptiness in my life, none of those things could fill my heart, none of them. And I came to the end of myself and I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ, and He came and filled me in a way that I didn't even know was possible but it was what I'd been looking for all my life.

And this is the answer to the question, why do you spend your money on that which is not bread and labor for that which does not satisfy? It's because you have an ache inside your heart, because you were created to worship, know, and love God. But when we're not doing it, we're cut off from God and even though we can't even articulate what's wrong, we react to it.

I believe that a lot of depression in life is a byproduct of that sense of just being at odds with God and knowing that I'm at odds with Him. Knowing that I don't have peace, there's no peace, there's no peace in my heart. There's no peace with things, there's no peace with people, relationships go up in flames because I'm not satisfied in my heart.

It's one of the reasons why I'm always delighted to do a wedding when I'm doing it with two people who know the Lord. They have something that is going to be the best leg up for them having a good marriage, and that is, know Jesus Christ. Because when they're satisfied in Him, they're not going to put so much pressure to make the other person satisfy them. But it happens even in marriages of believers, I've mentioned and talked to a lot of women and men

who've gone through marriage and sought, even though they knew better, sought to be satisfied by their spouse in a way that only God can satisfy and it's an exercise in futility. And it'll ruin your spouse and it'll cause depression. And the Lord will often bring such people up short after a period of time and say, what are you doing looking for in that person what only I can give?

What are you doing putting such pressure on that human being, that limited human being with whom you live? I gave them to you as a gift and you sought to make them a god in your life, you turned it into an idol. Only I can produce the satisfaction that you need, only me. And then we have to go through that period of brokenness and repentance. Lord, I'm sorry, I sought from this person what they could not give.

We're in the middle of verse 2. Look what God says now after asking the question, He says, “...*Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.* ³ *Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.*”

In other words, that same love that I poured out on David in that Davidic covenant. The Davidic covenant is so beautiful, you remember how that goes, basically, right? Remember David? He decided he was going to build a house for God and so he calls the prophet into his palace and he says, I have an idea, I'm going to build a house for God and the prophet goes, do whatever you feel the Lord wants you to do. And the prophet leaves and the Lord speaks to him as soon as he gets out the door and he says, go back, I have a message for David. So he goes back and he goes, ahhh!, hold the phone, God has a message for you.

Thank you, you want to build me a house, that's very gracious of you. But here's what's going to happen, I'm going to build you a house and you will not cease to have one of your sons on the throne and your throne will be an everlasting kingdom and of course, the fulfillment of that is Jesus Christ.

And David was so blown away, his prayer after he was told that by the prophet Nathan is so beautiful, when he comes to the Lord and says, Lord, who am I? Who am I that you would say something like that to me?

But look what God is saying to Israel as He speaks to them here at the end of verse 3. My covenant with you, He says, my steadfast covenant with you will be just like that certain or sure love, your Bible may say, mercy, that I showed to David, it'll be just like that. Speaking of David, God says, “*Behold,* (verse 4) *I*

made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.” and God's about to tell His people, Israel, He's going to do the same for them.

“⁵ Behold, (He says) you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.”

Do you remember when David used to pray, and he'd say, Lord, people, come to me, cowering on their knees, kings come to me and bow down before me because of you. David was blown away, but it was something God did because God made David's kingdom glorious. Now He promises Israel, it's going to be the same for you. I'm going to bring such glory into this nation that kings and nations are going to come to you.

Verse 6, great verse. *“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”*

It's interesting in these two verses the Lord gives a time reference. Not necessarily a reference, but a limitation, maybe is a better way to say it. He doesn't just say, seek the Lord, He says, seek the Lord while, which is a time word, he may be found. Do you understand that there's a limitation there? *“Seek the LORD while he may be found.”*

The Bible also talks about this as today. Today, when you hear His voice, do not harden your heart as you did in the rebellion, God says, right? Today, when you hear His voice, respond, because today is the day of salvation. *“Seek the LORD while he may be found.”* It's one of the reasons that you and I are passionate about sharing Christ with people because today is the day of salvation. This is the day when He may be found, there's coming a day when the door will close.

Verse 8 and I love verses 8 and 9, I quote it many times. *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

The Lord is speaking here of the incredible compassion and pardon that He will lay upon Israel and it's in that context that He shares these statements in verses 8 and 9. But let me just tell you, this is one of those passages you can take out of context because you know what? God's thoughts are always not our thoughts. It doesn't matter what the context is. God's ways are never our ways and it doesn't

matter what the context is. In fact, the heavens are always going to be higher, than the earth and in so, God's way is higher than ours.

And the reason these two verses are so important and I have to go back and read them. Guys, I get dozens of Bible questions a week, dozens. Do you know that I can't answer them all? Not because I'm physically unable, I try to answer all of them, but I can't answer some of them because I don't know how to answer it. People ask me questions that there's no way I could possibly know and I have to write them and have to say, I don't know, I don't know the answer to that question.

First of all, the Bible doesn't reveal it or I might even have to say, well, there's no way that we can know the answer to that question because our brains just aren't big enough, God hasn't allowed us the capability. And I usually will quote these verses, but I also quote these verses when people write me letters or call me or talk to me, and they compare their life and their limitations to God.

And it happens in an alarming sort of a way and it's a huge mistake that we make to judge the Lord by comparing Him with us. It's a huge, huge mistake because the way God thinks, the way God acts is entirely foreign to you and I. And the only way we know it at all is because He's revealed some of it in the Word of God, otherwise, we would be absolutely, totally in the dark as far as, what is God like. We'd say, I don't know, there'd be plenty of people giving an opinion, of course, in the comment section under that question, as there always is but nobody would know for sure.

Thankfully, He has revealed much of His character and His being and even His thought processes to us in the Word. But His ways and His thoughts are still so much higher than ours that they cannot be known or found out. Those are such great verses to hang on to.

Verse 10 says, *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”*

I love the strength of these verses because God is basically reminding us that everything He has ever said to us prophetically will be accomplished, you can bet your life on it. God says, whatever I send forth my Word to accomplish, it will fulfill its purpose, it will succeed in the thing for which I sent it. God's Word will not fail. Isn't that a comforting thought, you guys? God's Word will

never fail. Heaven and Earth will pass away, but what does God say? My Words will never pass away. Heaven and Earth are going to pass away, but the Word of God will not.

Verse 12, *“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”* Oh, I can't wait to see that happen.

“¹³ Instead of the thorn (which had just haunted Israel because of their sin) shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Chapter 56, this is not a terribly long chapter. *“Thus says (YAHWEH) the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed. ² Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”*

So the Lord is speaking here, saying that there is a blessed condition upon the man who walks after the Lord. He says, my righteousness has been revealed. How has God revealed his righteousness? Well, He's revealed it in the person of Jesus Christ, He is our righteousness, okay? Jesus is our righteousness, Paul talks about this in Romans chapter 3. He says, now a righteousness has been revealed that is not through the law, it is by faith. By faith, God extends righteousness to people.

And so God is saying here, blessed is the man who holds fast to that and He goes on to talk about who keeps the Sabbath. Now, of course, the Sabbath day was an important day for Israel and the Sabbath is Saturday. I was watching a movie, an old, it was kind of a western, at least it was set in the west, probably in the 1800s. And this family was going to church, and they had this hired worker on their property that didn't go to church with them on Sunday, just didn't want to go. And one of the little kids on the way home in the buckboard asked her mom, or actually it was her sister, she said, I wonder if God holds a grudge against so and so because he doesn't go to church on the Sabbath.

And of course, this is not the Sabbath, the Sunday is not the Sabbath. Over the years, people began to apply or speak of Sunday as the Sabbath, but it never was the Sabbath. In the Bible, Sunday was the Lord's day. It was called that because it was the day they..., and they didn't consider it a day that they set apart as better than any other day, necessarily. It was called the Lord's Day because that was the day Jesus emerged from the tomb, that was the day of the

resurrection. So, the Lord's Day has always been Sunday, the Sabbath has always been Saturday. In Israel and under the law, the Sabbath was all about resting.

God said to the nation of Israel, one day a week on the Sabbath, do no regular work and rest, rest, rest. And that's really all He told them. He said, do no regular work, rest, that's all they were really told to do, rest on the Sabbath.

Well, we learn from the New Testament in the Book of Hebrews, which, by the way, we're going to be going through before too terribly long. We learn in the Book of Hebrews that Jesus is the fulfillment of our Sabbath rest. He fulfilled it by doing His work on the cross and now we rest in His finished work. That is the revelation of righteousness that God has made available to us in the Bible.

So now, as you and I put our faith in Jesus and rest in His finished work and cease from our own labors of trying to be righteous in God's sight by doing, being good Christians and living a good life and I got to keep the law and I got to, got to, etc.” No!

When we rest, say I can't do this, I cannot be righteous, I'm going to rest solely in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we are keeping the Sabbath. We keep the Sabbath, because Christ is the fulfillment through His death on the cross. That's what Jesus said, I've not come to abolish the law, I've come to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17) Jesus is our Sabbath rest. We keep the Sabbath not just on one day, seven days a week, seven days a week, alright?

So, verse 3 goes on. He says, oh, and this is beautiful. I want you to take note of who He refers to here. He says, *“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.””*

Now I want you to take note of, very specifically who He's speaking of in these verses, He speaks of what? The foreigner and the eunuch. What's significant about the foreigner and the eunuch? They were both essentially forbidden from coming into the worship of Israel, the foreigner was not welcome to come.

Do you know, even when a foreigner, and I'm talking about a Gentile here, even when a Gentile decided, or converted, if you will, to Judaism, he still couldn't go into the temple, still couldn't go in. The only thing he could do, the closest he could get, was the outer courts of the temple. That's one of the reasons Jesus chased all the animals and those people buying and selling out of the outer courts, that was the only place the Gentiles could go.

They were called God fearers, God fearing Gentiles. They couldn't go into the temple, they weren't allowed. And eunuchs, do you remember in the Old Testament? God said that if any man had been emasculated, he could not come into the worship of Israel. (Deuteronomy 23:1)

Here's what's interesting, God now speaks here, in Isaiah, directly of the foreigner and the eunuch because these people were cut off and separate from the worship of Israel. And He says, first of all, concerning the foreigner, let him not say the Lord will surely separate me from His people because that's the way the foreigners were, they were separated from His people. You can't go in the temple, you can only go right here, you're separated.

But the foreigner, He says now concerning this new relationship, He says, let him not say, I am not part of God's people any longer. And then He goes on to say, *“and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”*” And because of my, physical situation, I can no longer enter into worship of Yahweh. Let him not say that even though the law forbade these people from coming into the worship of Israel.

Here is God throwing open the doors, speaking to these people directly and inviting them in, can you imagine? It's funny that the Jews never really got this. By the time Jesus came along, they still hadn't gotten this. They still had not put two and two together with the prophecies of Isaiah.

There's something else that the eunuch represents, I think. The eunuch, obviously, is a representation of people with a limitation. He's limited, there's things he can't do. He can't have a family, he cannot be fruitful in his life in that way.

It's kind of like the Lord is saying, when He says concerning the eunuch, let him not say, *“Behold, I am a dry tree.”* The Lord is speaking here to anyone, I think, who has some kind of a limitation in their life and He's saying, let not the one with limitations so focus on those limitations as to say that those things define me. And because of this, I can't, but the Lord is saying with me, nothing is impossible.

Listen to what the Lord goes on to say. Verse 4, *“For thus says the Lord: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ⁵ I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.”* Wow!

“⁶ And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Isn't that amazing? Look what God is saying to them. He says, I'm going to bring them in, I'm going to *“bring them to my holy mountain.”* In the old, under the old covenant, they couldn't even go into the temple.

But in that day, and we're talking the Millennial Kingdom, God says, I will bring the foreigners onto my holy mountain, into my very presence, to the very throne of my presence, and they will enjoy the beauty of intimacy like any other son or daughter. Oh, it's just amazing.

Verse 8 says, *“The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”*” And this is wonderful.

This is one of many passages in the Old Testament where God sought to expand Israel's understanding of the fact that He loved the people of all nations and there would be a gathering time for those nations and Israel just didn't get it. It was a message they didn't receive and there was even a significant pushback.

Remember in the early days of the Gospel in Acts, remember what happened when Philip started going up to Samaria and telling the Samaritans about Jesus? There were Jews saying, he can't do that, Samaritans can't be saved. And then he came back and started telling them stories about all the things that God was doing and then Peter gets called to the house of Cornelius, goes into his house. Oh, Lord, have mercy, he entered the house of a Gentile and he shared the gospel and they got saved and the Holy Spirit fell upon them in power.

And what happened when they came back to tell people? You can't do that. Peter has to tell the story, well, let me tell you what happened, and the Holy Spirit came upon them just the way he came upon us. And they all talked about it for a while and then they finally said, who would have thunk even Gentiles can be saved.

God had been telling them this for hundreds of years, right here, verse 8. *“The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others*

to him besides those already gathered.”” Wow! That must have shocking if somebody actually did read it and believe it.

Now verse 9 to the end of the chapter reverts back to addressing Israel again and her rebellious leaders. And this is a little bit of a downer finishing out the chapter, but it's important stuff to look at.

God says, *“All you beasts of the field, come to devour—all you beasts in the forest.”* And He's not talking about animals here. He's using beasts as a picture for His leaders, the leaders in the Israel and He's talking about animals that just..., wild animals. We don't see wild animals like they did back in that day. But wild animals would go in packs and they would just forage and they would just, they'd eat up all the pasture land or something that maybe somebody was using for their sheep or goats or whatever.

And He's now referring to the leaders of Israel like those wild pack animals that just devour, okay. And He says in verse 10, *“His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, ...”*

Have you ever, I don't know if you ever had a dog that can't bark. Kind of useless in some respects, at least as a watchdog. I mean, unless you've trained him to ring a bell when there's danger, something like that. Dogs, as much as a barking dog kind of bugs me, frankly, it can be really useful for letting you know that something might be amiss. Dogs have been used as security animals for many, many years.

Look what God says concerning the watchman of Israel. What is a watchman? It's someone who is watching for danger. He says, not only are they blind, not only are they without knowledge, but they can't bark, they can't say anything. There's one Bible version that says, they're dumb dogs and it doesn't mean dumb in the sense of brains, it just means they can't speak. Instead, what do they want to do? They're just ¹⁰ *“...dreaming, lying (around) down, loving (sleep) to slumber.”* And stuff like that.

So continuing this imagery of these leaders as dogs, the Lord says, ¹¹ *“The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all.”* ¹² *“Come,” they say, “let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.”* So you can see that the Lord kind of ends the chapter there with not a whole lot good to say for the leaders of Israel. They're not sitting on the top of the wall watching for the coming of danger or the coming of the Lord.