

servants of God, and those who do not obey are not his servants, no matter what their bloodlines may be” (Oswalt 1998: 650).

v14 “The contrast between these two destinies is stark, uncompromising, and final, for there will be no middle destiny for those who tried to do good or who were not that bad. A person is either a dedicated servant of God who seeks after God and pleases him, or one is a rebel who forsakes God and trusts in other things. Based on one’s choice, the destiny of people is either glorious and wonderful or extremely terrible. There is no equivocation or doubt about what will happen; it is spelled out very clearly in plain and simple language that everyone can understand” (Smith 2009: 713).

vv15-16 “While the rebels will leave their name for a curse, it is not said that the name of the servants will be used in a blessing (contra Gen. 12:2-3). Rather, the focus is on the *God of truth* (lit. the “God of amen”). The reputation and character of the people (their “name”) will be such that other people will not praise them, but will be drawn to the God seen in them, one who is absolutely dependable, whose promises are always “yea and amen” (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20), who embodies in himself the meaning and nature of truth (cf. Rev. 3:14)” (Oswalt 1998: 651).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What can you learn from this passage about God’s character?

How does the certainty of judgment of the wicked affect your daily priorities?

What is the significance of God’s followers being called “servants”?
What are the implications for your life?

SOURCES CITED

John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, NICOT, 1998.
Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary, 2009.

ISAIAH 65:1-16: SERVANTS AND REBELS

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 40-66

- III. The Holy One of Israel is sovereign over the restoration and salvation of his people (40:1-66:24).
 - A. The Holy One of Israel vindicates his glory over idols by predicting the restoration of his people from Babylon (40:1-48:22).
 - B. The Servant of the Lord will suffer to save his people (49:1-55:13).
 - C. The Holy One of Israel will return blessing to the righteous and retribution to the evil (56:1-59:21).
 - D. The Holy One of Israel will restore his people to a glorious new home (60:1-66:24).
 - 1. The Lord will bring his glory to the people and city of Zion (60:1-63:6).
 - a) The Lord will be the glory of Zion (60:1-22).
 - b) The Servant of the Lord will bring righteousness to Zion (61:1-62:12).
 - c) The Lord will judge the nations in the winepress of his wrath (63:1-6).
 - 2. The nation prays for redemption of heart and home (63:7-64:12).
 - 3. **The Lord responds to the nation’s prayer with the promise of a new heart and home (65:1-66:24).**

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 65:1-16

- I. God has patiently pursued sinners who will not repent (65:1-5)
- II. God will judge the wicked (65:6-7)
- III. God will preserve a righteous remnant through the judgment (65:8-12)
- IV. God will bless his servants (65:13-16)

NOTES

“These chapters [65-66] cite texts from throughout Isaiah (chaps. 2-4; 5; 6; 11; 13; 37:3,30-32), and thus they function as a conclusion to the whole book of Isaiah. All these studies suggest that chaps. 65-66 have a double function; they not only answer the lament in 63:7-64:11, but they also bring many earlier themes in this book to a conclusion by raising some of the same issues found in chap. 1” (Smith 2009: 697).

v1 “To this sinful Israelite “nation” (*gôy*), a derogatory term for foreign nations that is used instead of the covenant term “people” (*am*), God says, “Here I am; here I am!” This repetition could indicate something of God’s frustration with this obstinate nation that did not call and the urgent need for them to wake up and turn to him. One can almost imagine in modern terminology, God waving his hand and screaming out this exclamation, “Wake up, over here, I’m right beside you!” The failure to call on the name of God indicates just how far these people are from God. If people then or today do not call on God, it is not surprising that they feel distant from God” (Smith 2009: 701).

v1 “Israel’s problems are not the result of God’s refusal to listen; God was listening before they were calling” (Oswalt 1998: 636).

v2 “All day long God has been begging his people, if one dares to say it, to return to him (cf. Mal. 3:5). It is not he who needs to turn to them (Isa. 63:17) but they who must relinquish their stubbornness and turn to him” (Oswalt 1998: 636).

v5 “This verse introduces the crowning irony: these persons who are profoundly unclean warn off others because of their holiness! Ultimately, this is the perversion of the pagan heart, that what is good seems bad, and what is filthy seems holy (cf. 5:20-21; 28:15; 30:9-11). God had intended to make his people a holy people, and he still does; but all human attempts to reach that end through our own devices will bring only defilement on us, and part of the defilement is that we do not recognize we are defiled” (Oswalt 638).

v5 “He responds to them just like people would react when smoke from a fire is blown into their face and up their noses. Israel’s worship and the burning of sacrifices and incense were supposed to be a sweet-smelling aroma to God (Lev 1:9,17; 2:2,9,12), and God wanted the fire on the altar to be perpetually burning all day long (Lev 6:13). But these pagan people and their practices were more like the smoke that makes the eyes burn, irritates the nose and lungs, and causes a person to cough and turn away. This offensive irritation was not a mild or temporary discomfort; it went on every day, all day long” (Smith 2009: 704).

vv8-16 “The prophet explains in bold contrasts how God will distinguish between his servants and those who reject God. His servants who seek him will inherit the land, never be hungry, rejoice, and have a new name, but those who forsake and do not listen to what he says will have nothing to eat, suffer shame, be slaughtered, and receive God’s curse” (Smith 2009: 707).

v9 “God has the power to raise up a seed from even a field of burned-out stumps (6:11-13; 11:1; 53:10), and can bring out of Judah (cf. Mic. 5:2) one who will truly have the right to possess God’s land (*my mountains*; cf. Isa. 14:25; Ezek. 36:1, 8; 38:8). In the context of this book, messianic overtones seem to be here, but they are muted. It is not the Messiah who is given prominence in this part of the book, but what God can do in the lives of people over whom the Messiah reigns” (Oswalt 1998: 646).

v11 “One of the perennial concerns of humans is the control of the future. The fear of the unknown keeps driving us to a variety of sources in our attempt to know what is going to happen to us. Thus when God gives us evidence only of his past faithfulness and asks us to trust him to keep a variety of good promises for the future, we typically find this hard to do” (Oswalt 1998: 648).

v13 “The effect is to communicate in the clearest terms that God will not allow his promises to Abraham and his descendants to fall to the ground, but that the qualifications for participating in that promise are not primarily genetic. Obedience is what marks the