

“Two Destinies”  
Isaiah 65:1-16

June 17, 2012

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<sup>F</sup> Ephesians 2:14-16

<sup>G</sup> Matthew 5:6, Romans 10:11

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<sup>A</sup> Matthew 18:17, Psalm 28:9, 85:6

<sup>B</sup> 1 Peter 4:17; Romans 9:6-8; 11:1, 5; Isaiah 64:12

<sup>C</sup> Romans 10:20-21

<sup>D</sup> Romans 3:11, 15

A. Introduction

1. Prayer for God's Church

- a. that word 'church' in the NT is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*, from which you will recognize we get our English word 'ecclesiastical', the name of the OT book, 'Ecclesiastes', and so forth
- b. *ekklesia*, meaning 'called out,' is the equivalent of the Hebrew *qahal*, and both words simply meant the 'assembly' or 'congregation'
- c. when the OT was translated into Greek, *qahal* was rendered *ekklesia*
- d. so Greek-speaking Jews used *ekklesia* to refer to those who came to meet together in a synagogue; and it is used in that sense by Jesus in Matthew 18:17, 'If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.' even before the Christian church came into being
- e. so, in referring to the OT church, we are speaking of the nation of Israel, a people called out of Egypt to be God's people
- f. to the surrounding nations they were the visible people of God
- g. to this OT church, the prophets preached
- h. for this OT church the prayers of God's saints were made
  - (A) 'Save Your people and bless Your inheritance; Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.' (Psalms 28:9)
  - (B) 'Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You?' (Psalms 85:6)
- i. in like manner, two weeks ago we exhorted you to pray for revival of the church today – that those who have turned away from preaching the gospel might return – because they are the visible people of God to the people of this world, and God's name is hurt by their failure
- j. but we need also to give a

2. Warning to God's Church

- a. for 1 Peter 4:17 speaks with these words, 'For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of

God?’

- b. our text which we have read today begins God’s answer to the prayer of Isaiah in the preceding chapter
- c. it likewise is a warning, and we shall take it as such this morning
  - (A) it was a warning to the Jewish nation that, as Paul expresses it in Romans 9:6-8, ‘6b ... For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.” 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.’
  - (B) God’s words to Isaiah was a two-fold warning
    - (1) a warning, sprinkled throughout Isaiah, that Israel should not take her privileged position for granted, because God had redemptive plans to the Gentiles as well, and,
    - (2) a warning, that within the visible people of God, the nation of Israel, only a remnant were to be saved; again in Paul’s words in Romans 11:1 and 5, ‘I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! ... In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.’
- d. God’s answer to the closing question of Isaiah’s prayer, ‘Will You restrain Yourself at these things, O Lord? Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?’ (Isaiah 64:12) is to point out that there are

B. The Two Groups . . . . . 65:1-7

- 1. Grace to the Unprivileged Gentiles, verse 1 – ‘I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, “Here am I, here am I,” To a nation which did not call on My name.’ or, as much better in the AV and NKJV, ‘... unto a nation (unto a “goy”) that was not called by my name.’
  - a. the nation of Israel was privileged before God; a privilege of purpose
    - (A) for the Gentiles were unprivileged
    - (B) but God’s privilege was extended to Israel so that through them He should bring blessing unto the Gentiles
  - b. and verse 1 tells us of God’s grace extended to the Gentiles
    - (A) those who had long since wandered far away from God

- (B) who had disregarded the revelation of Himself shown in creation
  - (C) and who still do so today, worshipping the false god of science
  - (D) people on whom God did not place His Name, did not specifically mark them out for Himself and as His own as He had Israel
  - (E) by these, the Gentiles, God has allowed Himself to be found
- c. as the hymn-writer expresses it so ably
- Jesus sought me when a stranger wand'ring from the fold of God;  
 He to rescue me from danger interposed His precious blood.  
 O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!—{2}.
- d. contrasting Gentile and Jew, Paul quotes this and the next verse in Romans 10:20-21, '20 And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who did not seek me, I became manifest to those who did not ask for me." 21 But as for Israel He says, "all the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'"

## 2. Judgement of the Privileged Nation of Israel, verses 2-7

- a. Israel's attitude towards God, verse 2 – 'I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts,'
  - (A) God's attitude towards them has been uniformly and constantly one of love; 'all day long' referring to their whole history, from its morning in the exodus from Egypt to the present time
  - (B) but their attitude, has also been consistent, the same attitude as that of all mankind, that of rebellion against God
  - (C) their attitude was translated into their actions, all of which were – like the rest of us – shaped by the evil thoughts of their heart
- b. Israel's actions against God, verses 3-5 – now we come to specifics
  - (A) verse 3a, 'A people who continually provoke Me to My face, ...' – the sins that are now listed are done openly and defiantly, they are deliberately insulting to God, and cast, as it were, into His teeth
  - (B) verse 3b, 'Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;' – God provided, as recorded in the book of Leviticus, a pure and holy way of worship, a way that foretold in type the salvation that would be provided by Jesus' death on the cross; the tabernacle or temple was the

- place for sacrifice and the burning of incense, instead Israel chose her neighbours' impure worship
- (C) verse 4a, '[Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places;](#)' – this is describing the occult – still prevalent today, and sadly, engaged in even by professing Christians – the seeking of familiar spirits and messages from the dead; expressly forbidden by God for His people
  - (D) Verse 4b, '[Who eat swine's flesh, And the broth of unclean meat is in their pots.](#)' – wiser than God, they forsake the dietary laws He had provided for their health in the land He gave to them
  - (E) verse 5a, '[Who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, For I am holier than you!"](#)' – from these pagan rites they now thought themselves beyond the revealed, redemptive God of Israel; He is told to stay away, they are much too separated, holy, for Him!
  - (F) verse 5b, '[These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day.](#)' – one idiom in Hebrew for anger is 'fire in the nose' – by their attitude and actions Israel was playing with fire, putting fire in the nose of God, bringing His wrath upon themselves; look at
- c. Israel's standing before God, verses 6-7
- (A) verse 6a, '[Behold, it is written before Me, ...](#)' – the books of men's deeds – and those of Israel as a nation – have been opened and set before God; their indictment and judgement is plain.
  - (B) verse 6b, '[... I will not keep silent, ...](#)' – now God answers Isaiah's question of the previous chapter, '[will you keep silent?](#)' – No!
  - (C) verse 6c, '[... but I will repay; I will even repay into their bosom,](#)' – a time of repayment or recompense has come; God will carry this out; it will be carried out even into their very presence.
  - (D) verse 7a, '[... Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together," says the Lord. "Because they have burned incense on the mountains And scorned Me on the hills, ...](#)' – the reason for the verdict has been already written down throughout the pages of Scripture; their constantly, generation by generation going after false gods and raising foreheads like brass against God
  - (E) verse 7b, '[... Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom."](#)' or '[I will first of all measure ...](#)' – the bosom of a robe was used for the carrying of things; Boaz measured out into the bosom of Ruth's cloak her reward as '[a woman of excellence](#)' (Ruth 3:11, 15); in like fashion, God will measure out to Israel the recompense for their work; it is a reward, but a reward of punishment
- d. In the midst of this dark picture of Israel as a nation, God's answer turns to a pleasanter subject:

- C. The Remnant . . . . . 65:8-10
1. The Vine and the Cluster, verse 8 – Thus says the Lord, 'As the new wine is found in the cluster, And one says, "Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it," So I will act on behalf of My servants In order not to destroy all of them.'
    - a. the picture here is of a vine that is being either destroyed or severely pruned because it has failed to bring forth fruit
    - b. the vine throughout the OT represents Israel, and that symbolism is behind our Saviour's words when He said in John 15:1, 'I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.' – Jesus Christ is the true Israel
    - c. but on that vine of Israel there is seen a cluster that has in it the potential for healthy fruit, that will bring forth a blessing or benefit
    - d. and for the sake of this cluster, this true remnant within Israel, that branch will be spared; the vine of Israel will not all be destroyed
  2. Spared as a Heirs, verse 9 – I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, And an heir of My mountains from Judah; Even My chosen ones shall inherit it, And My servants will dwell there.
    - a. accompanying the Gentiles who find God, God provides the remnant from Israel, in order to make them His people, through Jesus Christ
    - b. this is described in Ephesians 2:14-16, '14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups (that is, Jew and Gentile) into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.'
    - c. heirs have the right of inheritance; and what an inheritance:
  3. Their Inheritance, verse 10 – Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks, And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds, For My people who seek Me.
    - a. Sharon is the lush, fertile plain on the west coast of Canaan

- b. Achor is the valley on the east, near Jericho
- c. from west to east, Canaan is to be the place where every need of the heart of man will be fully met; but this is limited
- d. 'for My people who seek Me' – but this inheritance is not for ...

D. The Rebels . . . . . 65:11-12

1. Who Forsake God, verse 11 – *But you who forsake the Lord, Who forget My holy mountain, Who set a table for Fortune, And who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny*
  - a. rather than worship God as He ordered it, at the temple on the holy mountain of God – these people serve the gods Fortune and Destiny
  - b. The first of these has the name Gad in Hebrew, which also has the meaning 'troop' and was the name given to one of Jacob's sons; but it was also the name of a false god in that region, the god of fortune, whose name was preserved in the name of a town, Ba'al-gad
  - c. The second of these was called Meni and was worshipped as the one who doled out a person's fate. The word 'MENE' is used in Daniel meaning numbered; Meni, as it were, numbered out a person's life
  - d. rather than trusting in the covenant Yahweh who watched over Israel this people said it all happened by chance – they are still around today, saying 'there is no God, we are on this earth only by chance.'
2. Their Fate is Numbered, verse 12 – *I will destine you for the sword, And all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight And chose that in which I did not delight.*
  - a. God says that as they will not trust in Him as their Provider, He will number or destine them for destruction
  - b. unlike the Gentiles who responded to God's grace, they rejected it
  - c. rather than follow the laws that would have shown them to be a wise people, God's people, they chose the very opposite
3. so in these verses we have two groups, the same two groups that populate the entire world today; there are ...

- a. those who seek God
- b. those who forsake God
- c. and now God tells us through Isaiah of ...

E. Their Two Destinies . . . . . 65:13-16

1. A Marked Contrast, verses 13-14 – *Therefore, thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry. Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart, But you will cry out with a heavy heart, And you will wail with a broken spirit.'*
  - a. the broken spirit here is not the repentant spirit that brings salvation but the remorseful spirit, such as that of Judas Iscariot, that only results in destruction
  - b. using the figures of eating and drinking – those things necessary for a person's physical well-being – there are here describe blessings, those things necessary for a person's spiritual well-being
  - c. Jesus, on the sermon on the mount, used a similar picture: '*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*' (Matthew 5:6) – that is the end of those who seek God
  - d. and as a result they can give a cheer, an exultant shout for joy
  - e. but to those reject God, emptiness: hunger, thirst, heaviness, pain
  - f. their end is shame; but, as Romans 10:11 tells us, those who put their trust in the Saviour, in Jesus Christ, '*will not be ashamed*'.
2. Their Change of Name, verse 15 – *You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones, And the Lord God will slay you. But My servants will be called by another name.*
  - a. a change of name given by God in Scripture refers to a change in a person's status or their character or both
  - b. those who forsake God will no longer be able to bear their current name; they no longer are the bearers of God's name, but rather a curse name, a name bringing upon themselves judgement
  - c. those seeking God, whom God terms with the possessive 'my servants' will also have a new name – perhaps it is to this that name of which Revelation 3:12 speaks, '*He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name*



of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.'

3. Destiny of the Blessed, verse 16 – 'Because he who is blessed {or, who blesses himself} in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My sight!'
  - a. for the blessed there exists an eternal relationship with the God of truth, that is the 'God of Amen' – God the Son, who is the Truth and is called this in Revelation 3:14, '... the Amen, the faithful and true witness...'
  - b. and all the sin, and all the troubles from that sin, will be forever lost from our sight, even as they are lost from God's sight through the shedding of Christ's blood upon the cross

#### F. Conclusion

1. there are but two groups
  - a. in Israel the visible people of God in the OT
    - (A) the many who were but descendants according to human nature
    - (B) and the remnant, those who were God's true elect people
  - b. and in the visible church today also
    - (A) those who, sadly, are but Christians in name only, not in truth
    - (B) and perhaps even here this morning some are not of the second group, those who by the Holy Spirit's work have been born again to new life in Jesus Christ
2. the invitation is given that through faith in Jesus Christ one can join and for ever be part of that second group whose destiny is eternal blessing

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AV        Authorized (King James) Version  
NAS      New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)  
NIV      New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society  
NKJV     New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM        Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870  
EBC      The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan; Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;  
EJY      The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans  
K&D     Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch  
Kerux    The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com).

2. *Come, Thou Fount* by Robert Robinson (1735-1790)