

**December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018**  
**Judgment and Mercy**  
**Isaiah 65**

**BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN**

Dec 16 1 Timothy 1-4	Dec 20 Hebrews 11-13
Dec 17 Titus-Philemon	Dec 21 James 1-5
Dec 18 Hebrews 1-6	Dec 21 1 Peter 1-5
Dec 19 Hebrews 7-10	Dec 23 2 Peter 1-3

**Lesson Introduction:** *This passage shows us God's response to Isaiah's intercession on behalf of Israel, which we have studied over the last two weeks. We will focus in on the first 16 verses of chapter 65, examining what the Lord has to say about Israel's rejection of Him, the judgment that they will receive, and His faithful keeping of a remnant. Verses 17-25 go on to discuss the coming peace that God's people will experience when Christ reigns over the New heavens and new earth. While we will not spend extensive time looking at those verses, it is important that we study our lesson today with that context in mind.*

**FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH OF THE PASSAGE:**

- **The LORD is a righteous judge and a merciful savior**

**Isaiah 65:1-16**

*1 I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, "Here I am, here I am,"  
to a nation that was not called by my name.  
2 I spread out my hands all the day  
to a rebellious people,  
who walk in a way that is not good,  
following their own devices;  
3 a people who provoke me  
to my face continually,  
sacrificing in gardens  
and making offerings on bricks;  
4 who sit in tombs,  
and spend the night in secret places;  
who eat pig's flesh,  
and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels;  
5 who say, "Keep to yourself,  
do not come near me, for I am too holy for you."  
These are a smoke in my nostrils,  
a fire that burns all the day.  
6 Behold, it is written before me:  
"I will not keep silent, but I will repay;  
I will indeed repay into their lap*

*7 both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities  
together,  
says the Lord;  
because they made offerings on the mountains  
and insulted me on the hills,  
I will measure into their lap  
payment for their former deeds."*

*8 Thus says the Lord:*

*"As the new wine is found in the cluster,  
and they say, 'Do not destroy it,  
for there is a blessing in it,'  
so I will do for my servants' sake,  
and not destroy them all.*

*9 I will bring forth offspring from Jacob,  
and from Judah possessors of my mountains;  
my chosen shall possess it,  
and my servants shall dwell there.*

*10 Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks,  
and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down,  
for my people who have sought me.*

*11 But you who forsake the Lord,  
who forget my holy mountain,  
who set a table for Fortune  
and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny,*

*12 I will destine you to the sword,  
and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter,  
because, when I called, you did not answer;  
when I spoke, you did not listen,  
but you did what was evil in my eyes  
and chose what I did not delight in."*

*13 Therefore thus says the Lord God:*

*"Behold, my servants shall eat,  
but you shall be hungry;  
behold, my servants shall drink,  
but you shall be thirsty;*

*behold, my servants shall rejoice,  
but you shall be put to shame;*

*14 behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart,  
but you shall cry out for pain of heart  
and shall wail for breaking of spirit.*

*15 You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse,  
and the Lord God will put you to death,  
but his servants he will call by another name,*

*16 so that he who blesses himself in the land  
shall bless himself by the God of truth,  
and he who takes an oath in the land  
shall swear by the God of truth;  
because the former troubles are forgotten  
and are hidden from my eyes.*

### Discussion Section 1: *Rejecting the LORD (V. 1-5)*

-In what ways does God say to the world, “**here I am, here I am**”?

-What is often the response of man to the LORD’s revelation of Himself?

-What do these verses tell us about the condition of the heart of man?

**Note:** *This chapter begins by God responding to Isaiah’s plea for mercy in the previous two chapters. The LORD reminds Israel that, although He has continually shown Himself to them, they have rejected Him time and time again. He states that He has “spread out His hands all the day to a rebellious people.” Throughout these verses, He cites acts of their rebellion, such as unholy sacrifices, communing with the spirits of the dead, and the eating of forbidden food (V. 3-4). These things were an assault on the holiness of God and displayed plainly that the people were not interested in submitting to a holy God, but rather, they were concerned with gratifying their own flesh.*

*What we find in these verses is similar to Paul’s description of humankind in Romans 1:18-32. In that passage, we learn that God has plainly revealed Himself to all humans through His power in creation. However, even though the reality of God is seen through what He has created, man has rebelled, and “worshipped the creature rather than the Creator.” In our arrogance, we have taken what was made by God, and put it above Him. We have desired the credit and glory of which only He is worthy.*

**Romans 1**, along with our passage in Isaiah, show us plainly that the natural inclination of man’s hearts is rebellion. Although God is constantly revealing His power through mighty works, whether it be the parting of the Red Sea, or creating wonders such as the Grand Canyon, our natural inclination is to reject His majesty, and seek glory for ourselves. Because of this, we are worthy of God’s righteous judgement, and as we will see in section 2, He will pour it out on all who ultimately reject Him.

### Discussion Section 2: *Judgement on Those who Reject (V. 6-7; 11-15)*

-How does God deal with those who reject Him?

-What leads to the outpouring of God’s wrath, according to **verse 12**?

-What does **verse 11** tell us about where many of the Israelites found their hope?

**Note:** *Isaiah 65 speaks plainly of the wrath that God will pour out on all who reject Him. We see that He “will destine them to the sword,” putting them to death. This is the consequence of not listening to the revealed truth of who God is. Although the Israelites had seen God work mightily among them, they turned their eyes to pagan gods such as **Fortune (Gad), and Destiny (Meni)**. The Lord must punish such rebellion. This may seem unfair, or unloving to some, yet we know that the Lord is good in all that He does (**Psalm 119:68**).*

*Ultimately, it is only in understanding His holiness that we can begin to grasp the justice of His wrath against the rebellious. **Habakkuk 1:13** tells us that the reason God cannot favorably look upon evil is because His eyes are “too pure.” He is perfect in all of His ways (**Deuteronomy 32:4**). In contrast to Him, our rebellious hearts are utter filth, as we saw in last week’s lesson. It then should not be difficult for us to grasp how He could pour out His wrath on the sinful, but rather, we should marvel at the fact that He graciously saves anyone! We will consider this stunning reality in our final section.*

### Discussion Section 3: *The Keeping of a Remnant (V. 8-10; 13-16)*

-What do these verses tell us about God’s faithfulness?

-What does verse 9 teach us about the way hard hearted people come to God?

**Note:** *These final verses express the unfathomable truths of God’s mercy and grace. All of Israel was worthy of the wrath discussed in the previous section, including Isaiah himself (**Isaiah 64:6-7**). Yet shockingly, we see in **verses 8-10** that God will save a remnant out of the very people who deserve wrath, because He is faithful to His covenant promises. **Verse 9** makes clear that it is Him who will bring forth this remnant, by His grace alone. This is true of all who are saved. Our salvation is a showering of God’s grace upon us! We are all worthy of the wrath spoken of here in Isaiah 65 (**Ephesians 2:1**), yet He has been gracious to us, and opened our eyes to the “**light of the gospel of the glory of Christ**” (**2 Corinthians 4:3-6**)! Praise His name today for all He has done for us!*