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Sermon Notes

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The Final Chapter: Eternal Worship vs. Eternal Torment

Isaiah 66:1-24

Main Idea: This final chapter divides the human race into two categories: true vs. false worshipers. It describes plainly the heart and behavior of both, as well as their eternal destinies: heaven and hell.

We come at last to the final chapter of our journey through this astonishing book, and what a fitting conclusion it is. This most visionary of prophets has given us a most fitting end to his work – a revelation of the eternal state of both the righteous and the wicked.

The Book of Isaiah ends with the New Heaven and New Earth, and with Zion, the New Jerusalem, eternally populated by true worshipers from every nation on earth.

But Isaiah also ends with a clear depiction of hell, the state of eternal death in which rebellious humanity will suffer in plain view of the redeemed. It is appropriate that the theme of worship – both true and false – unifies this final chapter. For the human race was created to worship and serve Almighty God in spirit and in truth, but by our sinfulness, we “exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served something created instead of the Creator who is blessed forever.” (Romans 1:25) This verse from Romans is the clearest definition of idolatry in the Bible, the corruption of our capacity to worship God. Idolatry has been front and center throughout this Book, as has God’s work of redemption in buying back his true children into true worship. Every human being worships

something – either the true God or an idol. So worship is a fit unifying theme for Isaiah 66.

I. True Worshipers Delightful, False Worshipers Detestable (vs. 1-4)

A. True Worshipers Tremble Before the Throne and Word of God (vs. 1-2)

Isaiah 66:1-2 This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? ² Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

1. God declares again his immeasurable, infinite, ineffable MAJESTY
2. This immense GOD has been the centerpiece of the whole Book of Isaiah... and here he declares the impossibility of finite man making a CONTAINER for the infinite God
3. The Jews were continually tempted to be overly impressed with their TEMPLE and with the religion that flowed from it
4. Before the Exile to Babylon, in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, God had to strip them of their false confidence that, simply because they had Solomon's Temple, simply because that Temple had been a place where God CHOSE to put his name and descend in a glory cloud to fellowship with his people, that God would NEVER allow a pagan army to destroy Jerusalem, never mind the Temple itself
5. So God had to speak through his servant Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 7:4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!"

6. Religious people are ALWAYS tempted to trust in their religion... to trust in the habits and practices of piety... as though such actions made them righteous
7. Solomon himself seemed to understand how pathetic even the lavishly decorated, gold-plated temple he built was:

1 Kings 8:27 "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"

8. There is no CONTAINER for God... no BARRIER in the universe that God has to respect, which says to God "Thus far you may come, and no farther!"
9. God FILLS heaven and earth with his COMPLETE presence... this is the doctrine of God's omnipresence, also the doctrine of his IMMENSITY
10. So here in Isaiah, he declares his sovereign dominion over heaven and earth: HEAVEN IS MY THRONE... the EARTH IS MY FOOTSTOOL!!
 - a. The heavens are incomprehensibly immense... the astronomers tells us that the observable universe is 46 billion light years across... that is, it would take light 46 billion years to travel across it
 - b. BUT THEY DON'T REALLY KNOW...
 - c. The creator of the universe fills all of that space with all of his being
11. So, any EARTHLY TEMPLE... any soaring stone cathedral built over two centuries with European marble and limestone, any steel and glass state of the art "worship center", any man-made place of worship is as NOTHING to God
12. He asks in effect "WHERE IN THE WORLD COULD THERE BE ANYTHING that could possibly house me??"
 - a. The Hebrew is emphatic, and it puts us in our place

- b. We desire to glorify God by building SOARING EDIFICES... the mighty cathedrals of Europe, with their awesome flying buttresses and their stained glass windows, can take the breath away from any human being
- c. God here says that he has a hard time FINDING them! He can't see them! They don't capture his gaze at all! He is absolutely unimpressed
- d. For HEAVEN is his throne... the entire EARTH is his FOOTSTOOL... if you were to decorate the place where his rests his feet with the finest gold, silver and jewels, it would not catch his eye at all
- e. Actually, all of the building materials you would use were ALREADY HIS before you used them!

Isaiah 66:2 Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD.

- f. Every atom in the universe is already God's... including every atom in your brain and in your hands
 - i) Your brain thinks up the plan for God's resting place
 - ii) Your hand crafts it and erects it and polishes it according to the design you created...
 - iii) But you belong to God, and so does everything you use!
13. SO... what "captures God's attention?" What holds his gaze? What does God search for and yearn to see in the human race? What "catches his eye?" BROKEN-HEARTED HUMILITY, and a fervent trembling at God's Word:

Isaiah 66:2 "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word."

- a. Humble and contrite in spirit = deeply aware of our sins and his holiness
- b. Deeply aware that our righteous acts are unable to save us

Matthew 5:3-6 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

14. God's RESTING PLACE is here... among his humble, broken-hearted people who have been saved from their sins by his grace in Christ
 - a. God is searching and seeking a resting place... a place where he can settle down and live with his people
 - b. He is searching among a human race that is deeply stained with sin
 - c. What he really wants is HUMILITY... brokenness... and a trembling expectancy in his Word
 - d. The "trembling" at God's Word means that these sinners understand that the God of the universe has the power to condemn them eternally for their sins...they know they have nothing to offer him... but with a trembling expectancy, they HOPE IN THE LORD... and with a trembling urgency they seek to live out his word in faith-filled obedience

Application: Does this characterize YOU? Are you deeply humbled by your sin and God's holiness? Do you understand that, if you are to be saved, it will be only by God's rich GRACE in Christ? Do you seek humility more and more? Do you understand that this is what makes us MOST ATTRACTIVE to the eye of God?

Do you hate your pride? Do you seek to humble yourself daily under God's mighty hand? Do you realize that your pride is the root of most of the misery in your life? That God hates pride... religious pride... pride of achievement... pride of intelligence and power and wealth... pride in a marriage, pride in parenting... pride of ANY SORT... and that if you would be utterly beautiful to God, you must be HUMBLE and CONTRITE in spirit and TREMBLE at his word?

Can you begin your day every day humbling yourself in light of this verse? Say, "O God, I yearn to catch and hold your gaze... my pride is offensive to you... would you make me beautiful to your eyes by being truly humble and contrite in spirit?! Would you teach me by the Holy Spirit to tremble at your Word? To obey it completely by faith and by the Spirit's power?"

B. False Worshipers Make Detestable Sacrifices (vs. 3)

Isaiah 66:3 But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol.

1. Here God is condemning the false religion of Israel
2. Either he is exposing the Pharisee-type of legalistic religion... outwardly observing the laws of Moses, but inwardly filled with wickedness and corruption... PRIDE... LUST... COVETOUSNESS... MURDER... IDOLATRY
3. Or, he is exposing the syncretism of some in Israel that mixed true sacrifices with pagan ones
4. Either way, this is a remarkable list:
 - a. True, Mosaic sacrifices like offering a BULL, a LAMB, a GRAIN OFFERING, and MEMORIAL INCENSE is compared to the most VILE offerings imaginable
 - b. To offer a bull is as bad as killing a man
 - c. To offer a lamb is as bizarre to God as breaking a dog's neck
 - d. To present a grain offering is as repulsive to God as presenting pig's blood
 - e. To burn sweet-smelling incense is as bad as bowing down to an idol
5. The religious pattern means NOTHING if there is not the broken-hearted humility of verse 2, and the trembling at God's Word

A WARNING to us evangelical Christians: We have our own sacred list of duties, and we can become proud of them: praying the sinner's prayer, water baptism, church membership, church service, attending Sunday morning worship, daily devotions, scripture memorization, giving of tithes and offerings, evangelism, involvement in missions, ministry to the poor and needy... NONE OF THESE THINGS can save us!! They are truly evidence of a sinner saved by grace, but they can be as repulsive to God as these animal sacrifices were in Isaiah's day

C. False Worshipers Judged for Not Heeding God's Word (vs. 3-4)

Isaiah 66:3-4 They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations; ⁴ so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me."

1. The essence of this false religious system is their INDEPENDENCE from God... like Cain, they have crafted their own way, invented their own religion
2. Even though the outward patterns came from the Laws of Moses, their hearts were FAR FROM GOD... they actually delighted in evil, loved lustful things, were idolatrous inside themselves
 - a. The independent spirit and the corrupt heart is the essence of all the false religion in the world
 - b. To LOVE wickedness is the core of where we started in Adam
 - c. Only the Holy Spirit can take out that independent, prideful spirit and that love of wickedness and transform us
3. True religions starts with God, with God's Word... it flows into our hearts by FAITH and by our repentant HUMILITY...
4. We did not CHOOSE OUR OWN WAYS and DELIGHT IN WICKEDNESS, but by the sovereign heart surgery of conversion, we have been transformed to follow Christ and his ways, and to love what Christ loves

5. But these false religionists were self-righteous and inventive... and repulsive to God
6. Their punishment is extreme:

Isaiah 66:4 so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me."

- a. They chose their path, but God will choose their end
- b. He will bring a terrifying end on them
- c. Fundamentally, they did not TREMBLE AT HIS WORD, but actually were deaf to his calls
- d. The gospel of Jesus Christ calls to us as sinners to repent of sin, turn away from self to the cross and the empty tomb, and find salvation outside of ourselves
- e. But these people refused to hear when Christ called

II. False Worshipers Persecute, True Worshipers Prosper (vs. 5-14a)

For the rest of the chapter, God addresses his children, the true worshipers, bringing them comfort and encouragement. Certainly the false worshipers are much in view, but they are always referred to in the third person, their punishment clear for his elect children to see.

A. False Worshipers Persecute the True (vs. 5)

Isaiah 66:5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you, and exclude you because of my name, have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy!' Yet they will be put to shame.

1. There is a deep-seated enmity between the godly seed in the world and Satan's seed, the children of the devil... we have radically different ways of seeing everything that is most important

2. God addresses THOSE WHO TREMBLE at his word... the true followers of Christ
3. He speaks of “brothers” who hate and exclude us because of God’s name
 - a. This has happened from the beginning... Cain HATED Abel and wanted to kill him

1 John 3:12-13 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

- b. The first followers of Christ were all JEWISH... and the first persecutors of the church of Jesus Christ were also JEWS...

John 16:2-3 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. ³ They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.

Christ said comfortingly to the church at Smyrna:

Revelation 2:9-10 I know your afflictions and your poverty-- yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 the Jews, ¹⁵ who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men ¹⁶ in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit.

- c. Here in Isaiah 66:5, these false brothers HATED those who trembled at God’s word, and they CAST THEM OUT—they excluded them—for God’s name’s sake...

d. And they MOCKED them, saying “Let God be glorified, that we may see your joy!”.... what a wicked demeanor!

4. BUT... look at the OUTCOME:

B. False Worshipers Destroyed by the Lord (vs. 5-6)

Isaiah 66:5-6 Yet they will be put to shame. ⁶ Hear that uproar from the city, hear that noise from the temple! It is the sound of the LORD repaying his enemies all they deserve.

1. In the end, God brings judgment on these mocking adversaries
2. The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Romans is the clear fulfillment of this prophecy!
3. So also is the condemnation that the rest of the chapter speaks of... the just wrath of God that he will bring on all the persecutors of his people who do not repent

C. True Worshipers Born Instantly by the Lord (vs. 7-9)

1. By contrast, even while the mockers are persecuting the church, the church is EXPLODING in size among the Gentile nations, the elect quickly coming to faith:

Isaiah 66:7-9 "Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. ⁸ Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children. ⁹ Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?" says the LORD. "Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery?" says your God.

2. We have seen this image before... of Zion being a woman giving birth to more children than she can count... (Isaiah 54)
3. This MUST BE the explosive spread of the gospel among the Gentiles to the ends of the earth
4. The effects of the CURSE are somehow mitigated... in the Garden of Eden, God cursed childbirth with great PAIN... but here, the woman Zion gives birth INSTANTLY and seemingly with NO

LABOR PAINS... she gives birth to an entire new NATION in a single day

5. So on the Day of Pentecost, when the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached by the Apostles in the streets of Jerusalem, three thousand people from all over the Roman world came to faith in Christ:

Acts 2:9-11 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

6. In a SINGLE DAY, the church of Jesus Christ sprang into being... and in an amazingly stunningly short amount of time, the church spread like wildfire across the Roman world... Paul said that within the span of his ministry, there was NOWHERE in Asia Minor for him to preach where no one had heard of Christ
7. These Gentile converts become in a single day sons and daughters of Abraham

Galatians 3:7 that those who believe are children of Abraham.

Even better, we are children of God:

Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus

8. The Sovereign Power of God is on display here:

Isaiah 66:9 Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?" says the LORD. "Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery?" says your God.

9. There are NO MISCARRIAGES in the Kingdom of God
 - a. When God pours out his Spirit on the elect, and when they hear the gospel of Christ preached, they BELIEVE!!
 - b. God doesn't bring the baby to the point of delivery and LOSE the child

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

D. True Worshipers Prosper Richly in Zion (vs. 10-14a)

1. This river of converts will flow into Zion, making her amazingly wealthy

Isaiah 66:10-14 "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. ¹¹ For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance." ¹² For this is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. ¹³ As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem." ¹⁴ When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants

2. These Gentiles will become at once delighted in Jerusalem... the Heavenly Jerusalem... the City of the Living God
3. We delight deeply in her, and yearn for her, and look forward to living in her
4. And as more and more Gentile nations are converted, the Heavenly Zion becomes more and more glorious, as we saw in Isaiah 60... the wealth of the nations will STREAM INTO her and make her radiantly beautiful
5. This is the success of the gospel to the ends of the earth
6. And the comfort of the gospel will flow, as verse 13 says... in this suffering, dying, afflicted world, we will be directly COMFORTED in Christ, looking forward to the day when at last there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain:

2 Corinthians 1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

III. False Worshipers Condemned, True Worshipers Commissioned (vs. 14b-21)

A. False Worshipers Condemned to the Lord's Wrath (vs. 14b-17)

1. The wicked continue to be in view in this chapter... for this is a world of BOTH wheat and weeds... both the good fish and the bad fish... both the children of God and the children of the devil
2. So the future punishment of the wicked continues to be a clear theme in this final chapter:

Isaiah 66:14-16 the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes. ¹⁵ Behold, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶ For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the LORD.

3. God's mighty hand will be on display to his servants... both in how he will SAVE them, and how he will destroy their enemies, the wicked foes
4. Verses 14-16 speak with terrifying clarity of the future VENGEANCE of the Lord on the wicked... God will pour out his FURY on them... the Book of Revelation (where we are going next) speaks so plainly of details of the great fury and wrath of God on the wicked
5. Here he uses FIRE language... God will bring down his fury like flames of fire and burn his foes like stubble
6. MANY will be those SLAIN by the Lord!!

The Sixth Trumpet:

Revelation 9:18 A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths.

The Second Coming:

Revelation 19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army....

Revelation 19:21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

A terrifying river of wrath and death...

Revelation 14:20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of about 180 miles.

7. This terrifying wrath and vengeance of God is real and it is coming... the elect take it seriously, and TREMBLE at his word:

Isaiah 66:2 "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

8. The pagan worship of his enemies is specifically singled out:

Isaiah 66:17 "Those who consecrate and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following the one in the midst of those who eat the flesh of pigs and rats and other abominable things-- they will meet their end together," declares the LORD.

- a. The religions of the world led men into the most abasing practices
- b. Satan has mocked us by our strange religions, which he invented
- c. But at the end, those things will be exposed and judged

B. True Worshipers Commissioned to Bring In the Nations (vs. 18-21)

1. By contrast, the TRUE WORSHIPERS are commissioned and dispatched to the nations!!
2. There have been many examples of the GREAT COMMISSION in the Book of Isaiah... just as Jesus said in the upper room:

Luke 24:45-48 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

3. Here is the PLAIN prediction of this Great Commission... written in Isaiah the prophet seven centuries before Christ:

Isaiah 66:18-21 "And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. ¹⁹ "I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations-- to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations. ²⁰ And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD-- on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the LORD. "They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels. ²¹ And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites," says the LORD.

4. God speaks plainly in these verses of the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth
- a. God will assemble all nations and tongues to COME and SEE his glory
 - b. This COMING and SEEING is by faith alone... there is no need for these distant nations to go anywhere physically... they will COME to God when they COME to Christ by faith
 - c. God will SET A SIGN among them... and that sign is nothing less than Christ—the account of his miraculous birth, his sinless life, the signs and wonders he did—healings, feeding crowds,

walking on water, and especially his own resurrection from the dead...

d. This is the SIGN God will set among the nations

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

e. Vs. 19: And some of the survivors... the remnant of Jews chosen by grace... will be SENT OUT... "Salvation is from the Jews"... so all the Twelve Apostles and the Apostle Paul were JEWS... the remnant chosen by grace... and God will send them out to distant lands to proclaim the gospel:

A small sampling of those nations is listed in verse 19: Tarshish (distant Spain); Put and Lud (northern Africa); Tubal (north, in the Caucasus); Javan (Greece), and the distant islands. The inhabitants of Put and Lud are described as archers, warlike, terrifying, but some will be elect, ready to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These Gentiles will *"see what had not been told them, and they will understand what they had not heard"* (Isaiah 52:15), namely, the redemption worked by the shed blood of Christ. The missionaries will proclaim God's glory in Christ to the nations, and many will begin spiritual pilgrimages to Zion ("my holy mountain," the New Jerusalem) by Christ, who is the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), the only pathway to heaven.

The language of their "coming" is fascinating, for they will come "on horses and chariots, in litters, and in mules and camels." (vs. 20) People will "come" to the New Jerusalem in an amazingly wide variety of ways, but the destination is the same. And the elect from every nation are called "brothers" with the Jews who trusted in Christ (vs. 20); not one of them will be missing, for "all" the brothers will come, and they will themselves become offerings to the Lord in the house of the Lord.

The ministry of the Apostle Paul was a direct fulfillment of this, for he was called to a priestly ministry among the nations:

Romans 15:15-16 because of the grace God gave me ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

And even these Gentile believers can immediately serve as priests and Levites to the Lord, for the old order of priestly divisions is obsolete.

Isaiah 66:21 And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites," says the LORD.

5. The “resources for the harvest field” are in the harvest itself...
 - a. As the gospel comes to a new people group, the missionaries are bridge-builders who lead a small handful in that nation to Christ
 - b. Then those people become emissaries to their own tribes, doing a far more effective job than anyone from the outside could do

Mark and Gloria Zook from New Tribes missions went to Papua New Guinea and patiently and carefully evangelized the MOUK people there... a primitive tribe of animists... they finally and powerfully believed... the whole village responded with powerful cries of “Ee-Taow” (“It is true...”) one of the most powerful missions movies I’ve ever seen... in the second chapter, the Mouk people sent out their own missionaries to the neighboring tribes

The Mouk churches are continuing on with what they have been taught. They reached out with the gospel to all twenty-four villages of their own language and have sent eighteen missionary families to people of other languages.

NTM missionaries Rick and Anji Zook partnered with three Mouk missionary families and presented the Gospel in the Lusi tribe in 2013. Three more Mouk missionary families were sent to strengthen that team. Six more Mouk families have been sent to

learn the language of the Kombe people. Another six Mouk families have been sent to learn the language and culture of the Anem people.

It is a huge step of faith for these families to venture into the unknown with limited training, leaving their property, families and security behind. They do it for the sake of the God who is worthy and the eternal life of the lost.

Isaiah 66:21 And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites," says the LORD.

IV. True Worshipers Eternally Live, False Worshipers Eternally Die (vs. 22-24)

The final paragraph depicts the New Heaven and New Earth as the final destination of this amazing journey of missions. That New Universe will be eternal, it will endure forever and ever. And so will its holy inhabitants, the redeemed from every nation on earth. The redeemed human race, all who have trusted in Christ, will spend eternity in the New Jerusalem, surrounded by the perfect beauty of a world completely liberated from its bondage to decay, brought into the glorious resurrection freedom of the children of God.

Romans 8:21 the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

They will worship God in spirit and truth forever... seeing him face to face in his glory

A. The New Heavens and New Earth Endure Eternally (vs. 22)

Isaiah 66:22-23 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I WILL make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. ²³ From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD.

1. The text says two things will endure eternally... the new universe and the people of God

2. First, God says the new heavens and new earth will endure forever in his presence... it will not die, it will not wither away, it will not perish, spoil or fade
 - a. It is a universe he has YET TO MAKE... he will make it in the future
 - b. It will be newly crafted, but unlike the original creation, it will not be EX NIHILO... out of nothing
 - c. Rather, I believe God will take the present heavens and earth and transform them into their final state...much like our own bodily resurrection
3. It is unlike this present creation, which has been groaning in bondage to decay, winding down, constantly breaking down, constantly dying, always dying
4. NO! The living things—both plants and animals—will live forever BEFORE HIM... in other words, BY HIS DIRECT POWER and FOR HIS PERSONAL ENJOYMENT!!
5. It's hard to imagine how radiantly beautiful that future universe will be... it will shine with the glory of God at every moment, with no shade or shadow of curse remaining
6. And it is there for the display of God's wisdom and power, and for his personal enjoyment—it endures BEFORE HIM
7. And in the SAME WAY, so will his people endure forever BEFORE HIM

B. True Worshipers Will Live Eternally (vs. 22-23)

1. There is a direct correlation between the New Universe and the New People God will redeem
2. Both will endure BEFORE HIM for his enjoyment and as a display of his glory

Isaiah 66:22-23 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I WILL make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. ²³ From one New Moon to another

and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD.

- a. God says in the same way, YOUR SEED and YOUR NAME will remain forever
- b. "seed" refers to Abraham's descendants... offspring, children... these are the redeemed from every tribe, language, people and nation
- c. "name" refers to the REPUTATION of the people of God... their achievements, their deeds, their glory
- d. Our crowns of sacrificial service to Jesus will shine forever, but they will shine for the praise of GOD'S glory, not our own

Psalm 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

3. The Old Covenant language: from one NEW MOON to another, and from one SABBATH to another...
 - a. This language means the rhythms of time's passage will not erode the glory of the new universe and of the redeemed people of God
4. These redeemed people will be BOWING DOWN in worship before God
5. Everything that was done in Christ was done that God may be worshiped, adored, praised, glorified
6. As we explore and work in the New Universe, God will be constantly on our minds, and we will not become idolaters but will use the new creation to worship and serve the Creator!

CONVERSELY...

V. False Worshipers Will Die Eternally (vs. 24)

Isaiah 66:24 "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

A. Jesus Used These Verses to Speak of the Damned

Mark 9:43-48 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁶ ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where "'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'

B. Jesus Used These Verses to Speak of Eternal Conscious Torment

1. Torment: not merely regret, but active wrath from God
2. Eternal torment: it never ends... the “worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched”
 - a. The worm is a metaphor for the decay of death... worms eat corpses after they die
 - b. But the worm never dies, so the eating goes on forever
 - c. The fire represents agony... and it also is never quenched
3. Conscious torment

C. The Redeemed Humanity Will Look Upon the Condemned Forever

1. The same ones that are bowing down before God in verse 23 are going out to look upon the condemned in their torment
2. “They will go out and look...”: Go out from the New Jerusalem; Go out from the place of joy and worship
3. Their gazing on these dead bodies represents a clear assertion that the wicked will die for the benefit of the righteous
4. The REBELS are dying eternally before them, in full view of their eyes
 - a. “those who rebelled against me” = the sinners, the ones who broke God’s righteous laws

5. The text says that the condemned will not be suffering apart from the knowledge of the redeemed... the redeemed will KNOW that the lost are in torment

Revelation 14:10-11 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night

- a. The holy angels will know of their eternal torment
 - b. The Lamb (Jesus) knows of their eternal torment
 - c. The torment is RIGHTEOUS, an act of God the Judge
6. Isaiah 66:24 says the redeemed from all the nations will know it too

D. Hell's Torments Teach Grace to the Redeemed

Romans 9:22-23 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction? ²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory

1. As we are aware of the torments of the rebels, we realize how much grace God has shown us
2. We see that we deserved the same torment, but were redeemed only by sovereign grace through the blood of Christ
3. Going out and LOOKING ON their eternally dying bodies keeps us eternally humble, eternally fueling our praise to God for his redemption:

Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The SLAYING of the LAMB is the greatest ground of praise from the redeemed forever! And the eternal torments of those who rebelled like we did and were not redeemed gives us an overpowering sense of the grace of God to us in Christ

VI. Applications

A. Flee to Christ NOW!!!!

1. This Book of Isaiah ends with a terrifying and sober warning of the wrath to come
2. Flee to Christ! Trust in him now while there's time!

B. Humble Yourself Before God, and WORSHIP HIM

Isaiah 66:1-2 "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? ² Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

The first two verses of this chapter teach us to abase ourselves in humility before the infinite God of the universe. Heaven is his throne, the earth is his footstool. There is nothing that we can offer in worship that he did not first give us. And there is no container, no building, no structure, that we could ever erect that could hold such a God. So we must learn to be completely humble before him, falling on our faces, trembling at his word. We must learn to have absolute reverence for the Bible, the word of God. We must learn to take every word not as the word of man, but as it actually is, the word of God which is at work in believers. (1 Thess. 2:13)

C. Despise Nominal Religion

We should despise nominal religion, no matter how "biblical" it is. Just as hypocritical Jews of the Old Covenant were following the outward regulations laid down by the Law of Moses, so hypocritical Christians today can deceive themselves by following the outward worship patterns of the New Testament by going through the motions every Sunday at church. God wants true worship, that which flows from redeemed hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit.

D. Tremble at the Fate of the Wicked

We should also embrace the clear teaching of the terrifying fate of unbelievers and idolaters in this chapter. God is potently clear in this chapter that his wrath will burn for eternity against all false worshipers who do not find the truth in Christ. We should not shrink back from the doctrine of hell as a place of eternal, conscious torment, but should clearly warn lost people as Jesus did in Mark 9. Yet along with that, we should let the doctrine of hell instruct us again and again concerning what we truly deserved, so that we are totally humble and filled with awe at what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross.

E. Embrace Missions... Sacrifice for the Spread of the Gospel to the Ends of the Earth

We should also rededicate ourselves to the glorious work of worldwide evangelization in Jesus' name. Isaiah 66:18-21 clearly predicts the spread of the gospel to the distant shore of this planet. Twenty centuries of fulfillment should give us a tremendous sense of confidence that God's power is fulfilling this prophecy before our very eyes. So let all Christians have a passion for missions, displayed in prayer, effort, finances, and sacrifice. Many of our best and brightest will be called upon to go to terrifying warlike people (who maybe do not fight as archers, but who are powerful with the weapons of our day) and win some of them to Christ.

F. Yearn for the New Heavens and New Earth

Finally, let us long for the day when the New Heavens and New Earth will shine with the glory of God in Christ! Let us thank God for the blood of the Lamb, who purified us so that we may worship his name forever! To God alone be the glory!