

# ISAIAH

## Chapter 66

*The Humble and Contrite in Spirit*

**Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? 2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. 3 “He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; 4 I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.” 5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: “Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy’; but it is they who shall be put to shame. 6 “The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!**

**Ch 66** The burning of Jerusalem by the Babylonians becomes a small-scale model of the unquenchable fire when the Lord will “enter into judgment ... with all flesh” (vv 16, 24). Conversely, the return of captive Israel becomes the prophetic symbol of a universal movement when “all flesh shall come to worship” before the Lord (v 23). (TLSB)

**66:1** *throne ... footstool.* God cannot be locked up within walls. Cf Mt 5:34–37. Is 6:1 gives a similar view of the Lord, where the edge of His garment fills the temple. Yet, the One who is high and lifted up condescends to be enshrined in the heart of everyone who is “of a contrite and lowly spirit” (57:15). (TLSB)

Is 66:1 resonates with Solomon's dedicatory prayer in 1 Kings 8. Since heaven is unable to contain Yahweh, how can this temple (1 Ki 8:27)? While acknowledging that heaven itself is Yahweh's dwelling place (1 Ki 8:30, 39, 43, 49), Solomon rejoices that Yahweh has caused his name to dwell in the temple (1 Ki 8:12–13, 29; cf. Ex 13:21; 19:16; 40:34). God intended Moses' tabernacle, and then Solomon's temple, to be a microcosm of the universe (Pss 11:4; 78:69). It was the incarnational dwelling place for Yahweh's glory, which is also on display throughout the world (Ps 19:1. Yahweh reigns both in the heavens above and on the earth below (Deut 4:39; Josh 2:11; 1 Ki 8:23; Pss 93:1; 99:1). He has made the totality of creation for his home. This is what Amos sees (Amos 9:6), and it is similar to the vision Jacob has in Gen 28:12. (CC)

*What is the house ... ?* Solomon realized that God could not be localized in a man-made temple, magnificent though it may be (1Ki 8:27). (CSB)

Reminiscent of the Lord's words to David through Nathan concerning the building of the temple in Jerusalem (2Sm 7:5–7). (TLSB)

The answers to these questions are “nowhere” and “anywhere.” Yahweh is making three interrelated claims: (1) he has the power to create everything; (2) he already has provided the place in which he

deigns to dwell; and (3) by identifying the divine “footstool” as “the earth,” against the usage of Zion or its temple in such contexts (Pss 99:5; 132:7; Lam 2:1; 1 Chr 28:2), he subtly shifts the focus from Jerusalem to the cosmic temple of all creation. “ ‘Do I myself not fill the heavens and the earth?’ the utterance of Yahweh” (Jer 23:24). Commenting on Is 66:1, Luther writes: “God is inside, outside, below, above the world. He sits outside of heaven and has His feet on the earth. That is, He sits on all creatures.” The Reformer employs this idea in his treatise *This Is My Body*: (CC)

**66:2** *humble and contrite*. The Lord repeats the desire for actions that stem from contrite hearts (cf Mt 5:3–4; Lk 18:13–14). (TLSB)

**66:3** Cf. Isaiah’s harsh words about ineffective sacrifices in 1:11–14. (CSB)

*slaughters ... kills*. The use of prescribed offerings (ox, lamb, grain, memorial) as a magical device to immobilize the Lord is as abhorrent to Him as sacrificing human beings or unclean animals such as dogs and swine. Archaeologists have discovered remains of sacrifices at Haror, including birds, puppies, donkeys, and a person. (CSB)

I could not speak more cruelly against the worship of God. “To slaughter an ox seems to you to be the most important thing. I consider it to be manslaughter.” Why does God do this, that He compares it with the worst kind of disgraceful act? He compares it with the grossest kind of sin so that the common people will understand. It is even worse than manslaughter, because the hypocrites make God a beggar and deny that God is God. To sacrifice an ox according to nature is the highest sacrifice and work. “This to Me is like murder.” Why? “Because you overlook the addition and condition of the promise. You pay no attention to the Word and the commandments, you have no need of Me, you do not acknowledge Me as a helper, and then you come with your sacrifice.” (Luther)

*breaks a dog’s neck*. The dog was “unclean” and not used in offerings. Cf. the law about breaking a donkey’s neck in Ex 13:13. (CSB)

A dog is an unclean animal and could not be offered as a sacrifice. Therefore, being an unclean animal, it was rated as the lowest in value. “Am I a dog?” (1 Sam. 17:43; cf. Matt. 15:26 f.). Puppies. It was an abomination to offer a dog as a sacrifice. They all knew this, and yet God prefers this abomination to their righteousness and sacrifice. It is as if He said, “I repudiate your highest righteousness more than the worst of all sins.” (Luther)

*pig’s blood*. The dog and pig are mentioned together also in Mt 7:6; 2Pe 2:22. (CSB)

The swine is an unclean animal in itself. A second abomination is its blood. To offer swine’s blood is therefore a twofold and an extreme abomination. Here you see that God prefers the worst kind of unrighteousness and abomination to the highest form of religion. (Luther)

*abominations*.† Idols (see Jer 4:1). (CSB)

To choose means not only to determine but also to judge that a thing is valuable, and on account of this feeling they are so blinded that they see nothing else and know of no other way than “their own ways.” (Luther)

**66:4** *choose harsh treatment*. Cf. 65:7. (CSB)

I will repay them. I will likewise mock them.” Thus we read in Deut. 32:21: “I will provoke them with a foolish nation,” and in Ps. 18:26: “With the crooked Thou dost show Thyself perverse.” What they

despise shall in turn despise them. Those nations and chief sinners are accepted, while they are cast aside. Read about it in the Gospel. Jesus received Magdalene, the centurion, Matthew, and others, so that He had the name “Friend of tax collectors” (Luke 7:34). (Luther)

*bring their fears upon them.* Physical and mental punishment. (TLSB)

*I called.* Through the prophets. (TLSB)

**66:5–6** The Lord reminds the remnant that He will repay their enemies, who are also His enemies. This passage of assurance culminates with a threefold call to listen to the voice from the city, the voice from the temple, and the voice of the Lord as He repays His enemies. (TLSB)

**66:5** *tremble.* Until now this has been a threat against the ungodly. Now he consoles the godly, the little poor people who have an afflicted conscience, fear God and His Word, and then, being in a state of affliction, are in terror. (Luther)

*Your brothers.* Fellow Israelites (see Ac 22:1). (CSB)

Brethren who hate the devout are so degenerate that they blasphemously challenge Him to vindicate His honor and to bring joy to those suffering for His “name’s sake.” (TLSB)

*Let ... joy.* Apparently spoken sarcastically, much like 5:19; Ps 22:8. (CSB)

**66:6** *city.* Probably Jerusalem. (CSB)

Here the prophet states the reason for the disorder. There will be a turbulent voice in the city, introduced in the temple by God Himself through the Romans. When the Jews persecuted the apostles and put their trust in the Law, God sounded a turbulent voice in the city—war outside and revolt and uproar inside; the government collapsed inside, and everything was laid waste outside. It is as if He were saying, “For that blasphemy I will send them a great deal of unrest into city and temple.” As you know, the Romans waged war in the temple. (Luther)

*recompense to his enemies.* This is a clear statement concerning this uproar, because you know that the prophet is here speaking about the reign of Christ and the rejection of the Jews. For that reason this passage is predicting disaster for the beloved and chosen Jewish people, for the city of Jerusalem and the temple itself, as if He were saying, “I will repudiate and condemn them bodily.” Their worship and religion must be destroyed, and the entire external worship will perish with the spiritual. Stone and wood will be destroyed at the same time. Therefore this disaster has to do with the highly religious Jews. (Luther)

**66:1–6** The Lord delights in those who are humble and contrite in spirit. But those who pursue self-chosen ways will be put to shame. Even the offerings they outwardly present to the Lord are regarded by Him as abominations. Although the glory of the Lord spans both heaven and earth, God Himself dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ. He became the sacrificial Lamb of God, whose death atoned for all our sins. • Lord Jesus Christ, by Your Holy Spirit create in us humble and contrite hearts, that we might tremble at Your Word and gladly hear and learn it. Amen. (TLSB)

*Rejoice with Jerusalem*

**7 “Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.**

**8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her**

**children. 9 Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?” says the LORD; “shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?” says your God. 10 “Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; 11 that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance.” 12 For thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14 You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.**

**66:7–9** The Lord here is not speaking of human birth but of how suddenly Zion’s glory will return to her (cf 49:19–50:3; 54:1). (TLSB)

**66:7** *Before ... labor.* So the church looks barren to the world, as if she would never bring forth but rather would be brought down in the midst of death and afflictions. There seems to be nothing here but barrenness, and yet, contrary to expectation, offspring are born out of that barrenness. (Luther)

**66:8** *land ... born in a day.* These questions show the astonishing, impossible nature of God’s restoration of Israel. (TLSB)

**66:9** *point of birth.* God has prepared Israel for rebirth; surely He will deliver her. (TLSB)

**66:10-11** The Lord commends comfort to the ones in anguish over the state of Jerusalem and those who will mourn her destruction (Ezk 9:4). (TLSB)

**66:10** *Rejoice ... be glad.* Such good things are in store for Jerusalem, that in the last analysis which includes the church of the NT, that when they who wish her well consider the situation, they will be moved to rejoice and be jubilant. This includes those who mourned over her when her lot in life was a less happy one. (Leupold)

The church has always been the gathering of believers. Scripture refers to that gathering as “Jerusalem” and “Zion.” The Lord addressed his believers and encouraged them to rejoice. They were to rejoice at the birth and transformation of Jerusalem. The Lord promised that the church would reemerge and the NT era would dawn with glorious and gracious light. (PBC)

*all ... who love her.* Cf. Ps 137:6. (CSB)

The faithful inhabitants and friendly peoples. (TLSB)

*who mourn.* Through the ages, believers have encountered sorrow as they witnessed the troubles of the church. Those in Isaiah’s day saw the hypocrisy, unbelief, and idolatry among their own people. Such realities troubled them deeply. When they saw the Assyrians destroy the Northern Kingdom and invade Judah, they mourned. Later their hearts melted as the Babylonians carried believers and unbelievers away as captive. They mourned because they knew that the sins of God’s people had brought about the exile. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of its unbelief (Luke 19:41). The church has been persecuted over the centuries and believers still suffer for their faith in Jesus. We note the erosion of morality and the abandonment of the gospel of Jesus Christ by so many in our own age. We too mourn over the condition of the visible church. The church on earth remains a faithful little flock battered and ridiculed by the world and even by some who claim to be Christian. Yet even the very gates of hell will not triumph over the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18). (PBC)

**66:11** Jerusalem is a mother to the nation and its inhabitants. See “daughters of Zion,” (TLSB)

*nurse and be satisfied.* In 60:16 Jerusalem was drinking the milk of nations. Here she is the mother (cf. v. 12; 49:23). (CSB)

Jerusalem, the church, is “the mother” of true believers; and from her, under God, they are nourished unto everlasting life. Gal. 4:26 (CB)

Here is the spot where true satisfaction is to be found. The true satisfaction that a healthy and normal child enjoys at its mother’s breast is very meaningful and instructive. There is no more healthy food to found for infants. (Leupold)

The gathering of believers will find nourishment, comfort, and abundance for their souls. The gospel will give believers all the comfort they need. Peter wrote, “Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). Luther wrote: “The church’s glory is the cross which remains despised and wicked in the eyes of the world. Yet through the Holy Spirit the breasts of the church comfort many hearts with peace and the security of faith” (LW, Volume 17, page 408). As believers have gathered together, they have found strength through the gospel in Word and Sacrament. God has richly nourished the church through the means of grace and will continue to satisfy his saints during the difficulties and tears of their earthly pilgrimage. (PBC)

**66:12** *peace ... like a river.* Peace and glory will overflow without end. (TLSB)

Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). The peace of forgiveness flows to the church and through the church. That peace comes from God. The angels announced it at the birth of Jesus. (PBC)

*glory of nations.* The Gentiles will bring into the church their power, their intellectual gifts, and all their resources. The church will benefit from all the best the nations have to offer. (PBC)

*overflowing stream.* Contrast the destructive flood of 8:7–8. (CSB)

Floods usually conjure up pictures of destruction. But they can also be beneficial. The Mississippi River brings much rich soil from the north and central United States and deposits it in the delta near New Orleans.

**66:13** *comforted in Jerusalem.* The Lord speaks with the nurturing image of v 11. (TLSB)

Isaiah’s prophecy drips with comfort and beauty. The Lord will take his people and carry them and tenderly rock them as a mother rocks her small child on her knees. The Lord himself promises such comfort and care. No wonder he encourages us to rejoice. (PBC)

**66:14** *you shall see* – All these good things will not be idle dreams. Israel shall see them with her own eyes. The happiness caused by the experience shall go deep down into the very marrow of her bones. It shall be obvious to all who share in the event that God has once again had a hand in the course that things took, the hand of the Lord has been at work, in behalf of his servants. (Leupold)

*heart shall rejoice.* You will see it. If you believe, you will not only hear but also experience it. This will truly come to pass. In trial we reluctantly grasp the Word, and our faith is weak. But while faith lasts, it grows so that the person can eventually say, “See how God has carried me in His arms.” (Luther)

*grass.* Usually a symbol of weakness. (CSB)

The opposite of the imagery Isaiah has used to show the facility of people. (TLSB)

*indignation.* It shall be obvious to all who share in the event that God has once again had a hand in the course that things took, that the hand of the Lord has been at work, in behalf of His servants. But for His enemies indignation lies in store. (Leupold)

The prophet’s prayer of chapters 63 and 64 voiced dismay over the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple. God answers dismay, concern, and anguish with the promise of the New Jerusalem. It will rise from the remnant of the old. God will fill it with peace and wealth. God’s people trust that God will make it wonderful. God himself will nourish the faithful with the gospel and comfort them with his presence and care. All this is an appropriate response to the prayer of God’s OT faithful. As we note these comforting and reassuring promises, God remind us of the sober reality that will confront all who have followed their own imaginations and become his enemies. As we have had so often, side by side we have rich, beautiful gospel and stern terrifying law. (PBC)

**66:7–14** The Lord will bring about a new birth of joy and delight. We should not look elsewhere for lasting satisfaction and comfort. Motherly comfort and peace like a river will satisfy and delight all God’s people. Just as a child’s mother meets his or her needs, so our heavenly Father meets our needs of provision and pardon. • Gracious Lord, by Your Son, Jesus Christ, You delivered us from destruction. In Holy Baptism, You caused us to be born again. Carry us and bless us with the comfort and peace that only You can give. Amen. (TLSB)

*Final Judgment and Glory of the LORD*

**15 “For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many. 17 “Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig’s flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the LORD. 18 “For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming[c] to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, 19 and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. 20 And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. 21 And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD. 22 “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. 23 From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD. 24 “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”**

**66:15** *in fire.* The use of fire is an execution of judgment (1:31; 30:27; 33:11–14; 34:9–10; Mt 3:12; 2Pt 3:10; Rv 20:10, 14–15). Its purpose was the complete destruction of evil. Burning accompanied the

capture and destruction of enemy cities (cf Jsh 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Jgs 1:8). The Lord's theophanies by fire include the bush (Ex 3:2), the pillar at night (Ex 13:21–22), and Mount Sinai (Ex 19:18). In Dt 4:24 and 9:3, the Lord Himself is described as a devouring fire. Fire is used as a metaphor for the Lord's anger (Lm 2:4; Ezk 36:5; Na 1:6). Cf Ezk 10:1–2. (TLSB)

*the LORD will come.* Judgment Day. (TLSB)

*chariots ... like a whirlwind.* The prophet pictures God as a chariot with fire and storm, based on the story of Ex. 14, where Pharaoh is the *chariots like a storm wind*, coming with a chariot. (Luther)

**66:16 sword.** You know what fire and sword mean in Scripture. But here we cite particularly the fire and sword of the Romans, who would destroy them. (Luther)

**66:17 sanctify and purify themselves.** By special rituals required by their pagan religion. Cf. 2Ch 30:17. (CSB)

*one in the midst.* Either the person leading the initiation rites or the goddess to whom they devote themselves. (TLSB)

*pig's flesh.* mice are associated with the Philistine god Dagon. (TLSB)

All who please themselves are rat eaters in an allegorical sense. (Luther)

**66:18–21** A new prose subunit (66:18–21) begins here with Yahweh's emphatic "and as for me" (יְהוָה). However, 66:18–21 is at the same time connected to 66:15–17 as "Yahweh" appears four times in each subunit. He alone directs the destinies of nations and kingdoms. Reading 66:15–24 sequentially, the universal judgment of 66:15–17 is followed by a massive missionary movement. Yahweh's advent in 66:15 accents wrath, while his coming in 66:18–21 is to save. (CC)

**66:18 their thoughts.**† The works and thoughts (66:18) refer to the idolaters (syncretists) described in the prior verse, who are defined by their unclean foods ("swine and the detestable thing and the mouse," 66:17). They will not bask in Yahweh's glory as this revelation is reserved for those whom he will "gather" (66:18). The theme of "gathering" (יָרַקַּ) is central to chapters 60–62 (the core chapters of 56–66): the new Zion is the place for the revelation of Yahweh's glory, acting like a magnet for the nations (60:1; 62:1; cf. 2:2–4; 25:6–8). His universal Gospel invitation is extended to foreigners in 56:1–8 (which presents the agenda of chapters 56–66), especially his pledge to "gather" yet more: "the Lord Yahweh, the one gathering Israel's dispersed ones," promises, "I will still gather [others] to it, besides its ones already gathered" (56:8). (CC)

*gather all nations.* Cf. Joel 3:2; Zep 3:8; Zec 14:2. (CSB)

*see my glory.* Usually linked with God's deliverance of his people. (CSB)

"They will see my glory" (66:18). The first time people "see" "the glory of Yahweh" is in Ex 16:7, where Israel witnesses Yahweh's provision of manna. From the vantage point of the seraphim in the temple, the whole earth is full of Yahweh's glory (Is 6:3), but a day is coming when what is visible only for a select few will be made obvious to all (Is 40:5; Ps 97:6; cf. Num 14:21). Jesus is the full embodiment of God's glory (Heb 1:3), and at the end of the age, he will gather all the nations to stand before his throne of glory (Mt 25:31; Rev 20:11–12). For now, the "mystery" is that "Christ in you" is "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27), but "when Christ is revealed—he who is your life—then you also with him will be revealed in glory" (Col 3:4). (CC)

The people referred to here are those who did not repent and follow the Lord. They are mentioned in 65:1-5; and 66:3-4,17.

The judgment upon Jerusalem by the Romans anticipated the final judgment God would visit upon all the world. Jesus said that when He returns “All the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30). The words of Isaiah’s prophecy speak of the judgment God will bring upon all people. He will come with fire and sword. God’s two judgments blend together. The destruction of Jerusalem would signal the end of the OT era and would come upon the Jewish nation who had rejected the Lord’s Messiah. The final judgment on the Last Day will descend upon “all men” and “all nations and tongues.” (PBC)

At destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord would allow some from the Jewish nation to survive. Not all Jews would be destroyed. God directs us to see what He would do with the believers that survive the judgment of Jerusalem. God would send some of the believers to be His missionaries. They would go to Tarshish, perhaps Spain, to the Libyans and Lydians, people in northern Africa; to Tubal, the region we know as Asia Minor; to Greece; and to the distant islands, the Mediterranean world. Those whom God would send out would “proclaim (His) glory among the nations.” As we read the book of Acts in the NT, we can see the fulfillment of this prophecy. (PBC)

“Then the godly will recognize My glory and their abominations.” In the last place, as he is about to bring his prophecy to a close, the prophet puts two passages about judgment, the abandonment and eternal rejection of the Jews and the reception of the Gentiles. This is the end, as if to say, “Because you are so wicked and will have it no other way and cannot be persuaded by any means, let your destruction take its course.” (Luther)

**66:19** *sign*. Possibly the banner of 11:10, 12. the “sign of the Son of Man” (Mt 24:30) at the second coming. (CSB)

A dramatic sign will draw the people, their kings, and their gifts to process to Jerusalem and enter the city (cf. 11:11–12; 43:5–7; 49:22–23). The “sign” (אִיָּמָה) in 66:19 is similar to the one in 55:13; both are connected with Yahweh’s action of regathering people. Beyond that, the sign is not explained. (In 7:14 the “sign” is clarified as the virgin who conceives a son and names him Immanuel.) In the NT, the portent that sends people out to gather the nations is the virgin-born Son, his cross, and his empty tomb (Acts 2:22–36). It is Christ, “a man attested by God to you with mighty deeds and miracles and *signs* that God did through him in your midst” (Acts 2:22). On the Last Day the “sign” of the Son of Man will be beheld by all as he comes on the clouds of heaven, and all will mourn (Mt 24:30). But he will beckon the chosen to the new Jerusalem, his holy mountain (Rev 21:1–2, 10). (CC)

Looking back at 7:14 the sign might well mean the Gentiles. God’s work will be done even if those originally designated don’t follow through.

*those who survive.*† The judgment of v. 16. Cf. Zec 14:16. (CSB)

The banner of the Servant (11:10–12) and the sign of the Son of Man (Mt 24:30) will call all to the holy mountain (cf Is 2:1–5). (TLSB)

Nations will bring the scattered elect to Jerusalem. The emphasis is placed on the gathering’s evangelical purpose, to “declare my glory” (Is 66:19). The notion of being witnesses (e.g., 43:9–12; 55:4–5) thus receives a sharper focus. Those who turn to Yahweh and are saved are constituted to be his ambassadors. (CC)



The missional strategy in the OT is normally one of centripetal attraction (e.g., Deut 4:5–8; Is 2:2–4). Yet here Yahweh’s tactic is a centrifugal sending, just as he sent Isaiah out of his temple to preach to Israel (Is 6:8–13) and Jonah to preach against Nineveh (Jonah 1:1–2; 3:1–2). This certainly is a statement “of mission as we today employ the term—the sending of individuals to distant peoples in order to proclaim God’s glory among them.” (CC)

Isaiah’s list of the peoples and places to which the missionaries are sent is evocative, suggesting a worldwide outreach, much like the list in Is 11:11 and Acts 2:5–11. Together these lists point to “all the families of the earth” (Gen 12:3). While “those drawing the bow” or “archers” may simply designate Meshech the inclusion of these weapons of war might indicate that the Gospel will be met with opposition, which can turn violent (a frequent motif in the book of Acts). (CC)

The role of these missionaries is to declare Yahweh’s glory. Just like the servant nation (42:6) and the Suffering Servant, they are a light for the world (49:6). Their goal is to bring the Servant’s free gift of righteousness to many more people (53:11; 54:17). (CC)

*who draw the bow.* In Hebrew this would thought of to refer to still other nations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

*Tubal.* Usually mentioned with Meshech It was probably a region southeast of the Black Sea. (CSB)

*declare my fame.* His victory. (TLSB)

Hbr *kebod yahweh.* The term *kebod* refers to the “weight” or “weightiness” of something, and thereby its impressive appearance or “honor.” Moses introduces the expression during the exodus (Ex 16:7) to contrast the Lord’s majesty with that of Pharaoh and Egypt. It comes to describe the visible manifestation of God’s presence in the cloud and fire of the exodus. It is the splendor of God’s presence that belongs now to believers in the promise, and that by His advanced preparation *will be* revealed to them and in them. (TLSB pp. 6-7)

*nations* – Those mentioned to symbolize the worldwide gathering of the redeemed were on the outer perimeter of ancient Israel: Tarshish to the west (see note, 1Ki 10:22); Pul and Lud in Africa (LXX “Put,” cf Ezk 38:5); Tubal and Javan to the north (Ezk 27:13). *Javan.* Translated “Greece” in Zec 9:13. (TLSB)

**66:20** They will come to Zion by all means possible. (TLSB)

*bring all your brothers.*† These are other Gentiles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

Who are “your brothers”? Are they Gentile converts or believing Israelites from the Diaspora? One thing is certain: “your brothers” does not have the same meaning that it has in 66:5, where they are apostate Israelites ostracizing Yahweh’s faithful remnant. Since chapters 65–66 testify to the birth of a new community (e.g., 65:8–9; 66:7–8) that includes believing Gentiles (56:1–8), “your brothers” is a mixed group of the elect from among all people. How are they “an offering to Yahweh” (66:20)? These believers are gifts, that is, “the firstfruits” of those who are in Christ (e.g., 2 Thess 2:13; James 1:18; Rev 14:4). Paul embraces this metaphor when he speaks of his converts as “the offering of the Gentiles,” “acceptable” and “sanctified by the Holy Spirit,” an “offering” that is a validation of his ministry (Rom 15:16). (CC)

*holy mountain.* The former distinctions between clean and unclean will pass away. In Christ, all of the barriers between Israelites and Gentiles are forever banished (cf. Gal 3:28–29; Eph 2:11–22). The kingdom that Yahweh establishes on his “holy mountain” (Is 66:20; cf. Is 65:25; Rev 21:10) is a realm where everyone is “holy” (Is 62:12; Zech 14:20–21; Rev 20:6). (CC)

*grain offering ... to the house of the Lord.* As the Israelites were to bring their tithes and offerings (see Dt 12:5–7). (CSB)

*on horses* – Horses were ceremonially clean animals. This says that the Gentiles will come with offerings that are ceremonially pure and sanctified in every way. This is a stark contrast what the Israelites bring in verse 17. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

**66:21** *some of them.*† No longer will only Levites be eligible to become priests as in the old covenant; all of spiritual Israel will be a “holy priesthood” (1Pe 2:5, 9). (CSB)

The Levites would not automatically be chosen as the priests because they failed to provide proper spiritual leadership. This opens the door for the Gentiles to serve the Lord in thus capacity.

The old system, in which the priesthood was limited to the sons of Aaron (Num 18:7; cf. Ezek 44:6–13), has become obsolete. Every man in the new community will have the opportunity to enjoy access to the highest ranks of clerical leadership. Timothy is an example of a man who, though of mixed Jewish-Gentile ancestry (Acts 16:1), became a pastor in the Christian church (2 Tim 1:6). And while the pastoral office in the church is limited to qualified men (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), already now, baptized men and women alike are God’s “sons” and Abraham’s “heirs” (Gal 3:26–29) and hold holy office in the “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9; see also Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Gentiles are not excluded from anything. (CC)

However, throughout Israel’s history, more often than not the people failed in their calling to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6). The holy God then took up residence in human flesh, in the person of Jesus, to be his holy temple forever (Jn 2:19–22; cf. “tabernacled,” Jn 1:14). He is “*the Holy One*” (e.g., Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; Jn 6:69). Through his suffering, death, and resurrection (“in three days I will raise [this temple],” Jn 2:19), Christ has formed for himself a new “holy priesthood” and “holy nation” (1 Pet 2:5, 9). When Jesus returns he will bring down the holy city, Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). (CC)

Yahweh seeks people from every tribe and nation to be a part of this everlasting holy priesthood. They will arrive by means of every form of transportation: horses, chariots, wagons, mules, and camels. (CC)

**66:22** *new heavens ... new earth.* As lasting as the new creation is the crown of His creation, His restored people. For the servants of the Lord, life goes on eternally in the presence of the Lord (Rv 21:2–4) with a share in His glory (Is 4:2; 11:10; 43:7; 58:8; 60:1–2, 13; 62:2). Cf v 24 for the final place of those who rebel. (TLSB)

The preaching of the Gospel a new Jerusalem is formed (Christian church). All the people of the earth are not a part of that chosen group including us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

Nations will be gathered to see Yahweh’s glory (66:18) and then be sent to the unbelieving nations to announce what they have seen (66:19). These missionaries are also the subject in 66:20–21 and will therefore bring the elect (“all your brothers,” 66:20) to the new Jerusalem. Some converted Gentiles will even become priests (66:21). (CC)

**66:23** *New Moon*. All time will be holy. (TLSB)

Just as the first creation reached its zenith with Yahweh's gift of the Sabbath (Gen 2:2–3), so will the new creation. Poetic language is being used here, and so we must avoid an overly literalistic interpretation. Eternal existence on Zion will not just consist of weekly and monthly worship gatherings, but will also find glorious and joy-filled expression within the flow of a continual life of receiving from God's grace and then giving back to God in worship and to one another. We will perfectly preserve justice and do righteousness (Is 56:1). It will be a perpetual living in "Yahweh's year of favor" (61:2), where all of "Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness" (1:27). Zech 14:16–21 also envisions the restored order as one where worship is a defining characteristic. (CC)

The believers gathered from Gentile nations (Is 66:18–19) become "your brothers" (66:20). Just so, "your offspring" and "your name" (66:22) now morph into "all flesh" (66:23), which denotes the full number of the elect who will inhabit the new heavens and the new earth (65:17–25; 66:22). Life will continue eternally in the presence of the triune God (Rev 21:2–4) as we share in his glory. (CC)

The godly have a continuous Sabbath. This will not end until the end of time comes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

**66:24** Quoted in part in Mk 9:48. (CSB)

Gruesome evidence of God's victory. (TLSB)

*go out and look*. The Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew *ge' hinnom*, from which the word "Gehenna" comes) was located southwest of Jerusalem and became a picture of hell. See Ne 11:30; Jer 7:32. (CSB)

*worm will not die*. There will be everlasting torment. See 14:11; 48:22; 50:11; 57:21. (CSB)

Jesus used these terms to describe the torment of hell (Mk 9:43–48). (TLSB)

*abhorrence*. The Hebrew for this word is translated "contempt" in Da 12:2. (CSB)

Rendered "contempt" in Dn 12:2. (TLSB)

They have been consigned to eternal fire. This text, known well enough from Mark 9:48, states that the ungodly Jews are condemned forever. They have their existence here as dead bodies. So we see an unquenchable fire and an undying worm. The bite of the conscience is in truth that worm. Sin is the worm that bites day and night. Afterwards comes the *fire*. *And they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh*. (Luther)

**66:15–24** With hot rebuke, Isaiah closes his prophecy. Though he has emphasized God's grace and restoration in the preceding chapters, he ends with the fires of punishment because his hearers will not repent. This day, with repentant cry, lift your voice to the Maker of heaven and earth. He who has every right to condemn also has every desire to forgive you and raise you to new life as He demonstrated toward you in His Son, the Savior from sin and hell. • Holy Jesus, sanctify and purify me from all uncleanness. Quench my passion for sin, and grant me life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)