

COME TO ME

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I. Isaiah 55:1-3 – Introduction¹

A. Isa. 55:1-3 (NKJV)²

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for [what is] not bread, And your wages for [what] does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat [what is] good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you-The sure mercies of David. (Isaiah 55:1-3)

B. Core Message of Christianity

1. An invitation of ultimate satisfaction.
2. An invitation without cost.
3. An invitation available to all.
4. The only stipulation being: *Drink! Come to Me!*
5. Sadly, this offer of God, which seems too good to be true, has met with great resistance by mankind.

II. God's Invitation

A. The invitation is radical.

1. "Ho!" - "pay attention!"
2. "Listen carefully" - "extend your ear"
there are important details here you should not miss!
3. That which is beyond price is being given away for free!
4. Satisfaction guaranteed!
Not just satisfaction, but an abundant delight for the soul.

B. The invitation is to individuals.

1. "Every thirsty one" - the Hebrew adjective "thirsty" is in the singular form.
2. Not based upon membership or participation in any group or society.

1

In the interest of size, sermon illustrations have been omitted.

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C. The invitation is to the thirsty.

1. Arid country

The Hebrew word found here for "thirsty" is also used to describe arid country.

a) Devoid of life

Dry, unproductive and barren places. Devoid of life and lacking in value.

b) The context

In the setting in which Isaiah wrote, the availability of water had great significance. Thus, the desire for water was an especially powerful metaphor for a powerful longing.

c) Luxurious drinks

To emphasize the refreshing luxury of the offer, not just water, but wine and milk are mentioned.

2. Recognizing and admitting thirst

All are lacking, but not all recognize their thirst.

a) You can lead a horse to water, but can't make it drink.

b) Thirst is the motivation to take action, "come!" and to "drink!"

Responding to the imperative command, "Come!" requires *action* and *motion* on the part of the hearer.

D. The invitation is without cost.

1. Universal

Therefore, the invitation is universal and without limit because it is available to all men and women at every level of society, at every place, and at every time in history.

2. Level playing field

Nobody is too poor for that which is free. Nobody is rich enough to purchase that which is without cost.

3. The Contrast

Yet man labors for that which costs but does not fulfill.

a) Verse 2

"Why do you spend money for that which is not bread?"

(1) From the root of this Hebrew word, we get the word "shekel."

(2) It speaks of our misguided tendency to place value upon that which has little worth while at the same time undervaluing that which has ultimate worth.

b) Bread

The word "bread" could also be translated as "grain" and represents that which is expected to provide nourishment.

(1) A bad deal

Exchanging great toil for that which is empty.

- (2) Spiritual Food
The money is spent, but it does not yield that which we seek. Here, as in John chapter 6, that which is physical (wine and bread or grain) is speaking of spiritual food.
- (3) Physically Full, Spiritually Starved
It is a sobering fact of history that the point at which a nation enjoys its greatest physical prosperity is the time during which spiritual conditions are already in serious decline.
- c) When God asks questions
It is time to pay close attention to our condition and our response.

III. Man's Resistance

A. Pride

What is pride but our erroneous notion of self-worth in relation to a Holy God.

1. Separation from God

We do not comprehend the enormity of the gulf separating man from God.

a) Holiness of God

- (1) Our need of redemption is not seen as the critical response of a sinful being under the searching gaze of a Holy God.
- (2) Redemption, where the concept is still taught, has been reduced to the level of another self-help cure. Salvation is reduced to being one among a number of ways to lead a more fulfilling life.
- (3) Today's view of God often begins with man and ends with a puny God whereas it should be exactly the opposite—beginning with a Holy God and ending with a puny man.

b) Sinfulness of Man.

- (1) Unbiblical belief that people are "good by nature."
- (2) This denies reality and flies in the face of historical and personal evidence.
- (3) Studiously voided from many pulpits in favor of a gospel of convenience and self-help.
- (4) Our unwillingness to offend our listeners places them in great danger because they lack any sense of thirst and come to believe that a God of judgment is a notion restricted to the pages of the Old Testament.

B. Pride – bolstered by systems of good works

1. Price not too high

For the man-centered approach to be viable would suppose that the price of reconnecting man with God could be born by man. That the cost of reunification with God could be established—and paid by each individual.

2. Guarantees endless toil

Such a system is never free because the basis for satisfaction is inseparably connected to human effort or to an imagined path of deeper spirituality.

Here, God declares through Isaiah, that those who hunger and thirst can obtain *at no cost* that which cannot be bought *at any cost*.

C. Bankruptcy of good deeds

1. Only two belief systems

Among all the religious beliefs in the world, there are but two varieties. Jesus referred to these two ways as "the narrow gate . . . which leads to life" and "the broad gate . . . that leads to destruction."

a) The wide gate

A variety of world views, initiated by men, whereby man attempts to ascend toward God (or Godhood) on man's own terms. The wide gate allows man to retain, and even build his pride on his imagined ascend toward God.

(1) Different manifestations, identical at the core

(a) A system of good works or spiritual achievement where man essentially defines how one is to approach God. (In some systems, the ultimate goal may be a God-concept such as *Nirvana* in the eightfold path of Buddhism, or even the ascent of man toward the perfection of humanistic atheism.)

(b) A devaluing of Isaiah's life-giving water and milk such that their purchase price is now within the reach of man.

(2) Roman Catholicism

By works of penance - man can contribute toward redemption through his own atoning actions⁴

(a) Luther's labor of penance for sin

(b) Modern-day crucifixion reenactments

(3) Islam

(a) Salvation by Good Deeds

Islam has no interest in "wine and milk without money and without price" because Islam teaches that man has the necessary funds to purchase the goods.

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"The Sacrament of Penance . . . is that Sacrament by which the sinner, who repents of his sins, acknowledges them sincerely and has the will *to render atonement*, has his sins, committed after his Baptism, remitted in the absolution pronounced by the priest." [emphasis mine] Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals Of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books And Publishers, Inc., 1974), 416. ISBN 0-89555-009-1

- i) Surah 23:102-103
Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy—they will attain salvation: But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls, in Hell will they abide.⁶
 - ii) Commentary
"Good and evil deeds will be weighed against each other. If the good deeds prevail; the soul will attain *falah*, i.e., prosperity, well-being, bliss, or salvation; if the contrary, there will be the misery and anguish of Hell."⁷
- (4) Judaism
- (a) Jewish Study Bible:
"In Judaism, the estrangement caused by the innate human appetite for evil does not require an act of messianic redemption to be healed. Rather, the practice and study of Torah renew intimacy with the God of Israel and lead to eternal life. The Holy One (blessed be He) created the Evil Inclination, He created Torah as its antidote." (b. B. Bal. 16a)⁹
 - (b) Judaism's approach to God differs little from Islam. In the most important element—the means of redemption—it is identical.
- b) The narrow way – a single path, initiated by God, by which God has chosen to descend to man.
- (1) Separates true Christianity from all other systems of religion.
 - (2) Does away forever with the idea that man may approach God on his own terms.
 - (3) The free water and bread preclude systems of good deeds, merit, and all attempts to gain God's acceptance through performance.

D. That which is priceless cannot be purchased.

1. Lacking a wedding garment

Those who refuse the narrow gate and enter by the broad gate are like the man Jesus spoke of trying to attend the king's wedding without the proper garment, or covering. He imagined he could attend the wedding on his own terms.

a) Mtt. 22:9-13

So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding [hall] was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not

⁶ Ali, A. Y. (2004). *The meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Electronic version.) (Surah 23:102-103).

⁷ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning Of the Holy Quran* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2001), p861 n2941. ISBN 0-915957-76-0

⁹ Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 18. ISBN:0-19-529751-2

have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast [him] into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

- b) Both good and bad were invited. Attendance at the wedding was not dependent upon having the means to purchase entry.
- c) Those without a garment are thrown out.

IV. Who Pays the Price?

A. Sure mercies of David

To respond to Isaiah's free life-giving invitation we must give up all notions of paying for that which we cannot afford and for which God has already paid. Instead we must depend upon the "everlasting covenant," the "sure mercies of David" which find fulfilment in the ultimate Son of David, Jesus Christ.

This covenant, mentioned in verse 3 of Isaiah, is non-other than the covenant which Jesus referred to at the Last Supper when He said, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins "(Mtt. 26:28).

1. It is Jesus Who was born in Bethlehem, the house of bread (Mic. 5:2).
2. It is Jesus Who said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)
3. It is Jesus Who said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:58)

B. God is boss – He sets the rules.

He determined to pay the price because of the simple fact that this water, wine, milk, and bread which satisfies the soul it is beyond human valuation (Gen. 22:7-8; 1 Peter 1:17-19)

C. Who will come?

1. These three simple verses in Isaiah provide the key to side-stepping a millennia of fruitless spiritual toil and heartache for that which cannot satisfy.
2. God's simple offer continues still: "Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isa. 55:3)

V. Passage in Hebrew

| Isaiah 55:1 | | |
|-------------|-----------------|--|
| a | הוֹי | interjection Not the more frequent 'behold.' Encouraging or inciting. Often negative preceding judgment: 'Woe.' 'Up!' in order to flee in Zec. 2:10. 'Ha!' Encouraging, but with a touch of sympathy or pity. |
| b | כָּל־צִמְאָ | noun (masculine, singular, construct) + adjective (masculine, singular) "Every thirsty [one]" - the call is to <u>individuals</u> . Also used to describe arid country. Dry and <u>barren</u> land. Individuals who <i>are thirsty</i> . This is their <u>condition</u> . The interjection above is directed at those who thirst, <u>not ones who do not know their lack</u> . <u>Thirst</u> as the antithesis of <u>water</u> (which follows). |
| c | לָבוּ הֵלֵךְ | verb (qal, imperative, masculine, plural) A <u>command</u> : "You [all] Come!" Given to the "thirsty individuals" as a group. Often translated as "walk," "journey," "step." Its antonyms are: <i>yāšab</i> "sit," and <i>āmad</i> "stand." ¹⁰ The command is to take <u>action</u> and requires <u>motion</u> . |
| d | לַמַּיִם | preposition + article + noun (masculine, dual) "to the waters" The <u>antithesis/antidote</u> of thirst. The waters will satiate their thirst. |
| e | וְאִישׁוֹ | conjunction + pronoun (relative) "and/even who" |
| f | אֵין־לוֹ | adverb + preposition + suffix (3 rd person, masculine, singular) "there is not for him" The offer does not depend upon the resources of the individual being invited. All men are on an even playing field. |
| g | כֶּסֶף | noun (common, masculine, singular) "silver" (athnaq) |
| h | לָבוּ | See c above. "You [all] come!" |

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Harris, R. L., Harris, R. L., Archer, G. L., & Waltke, B. K. (1999, c1980). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (216). Chicago: Moody Press.

| Isaiah 55:1 | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| i | שָׁבְרוּ verb (qal,imperative, masculine, plural) שָׁבַר | "Each of you [all] buy [grain]!" An imperative command! To the individuals who thirst. They have both thirst and <u>hunger</u> . It is <u>righteousness</u> they hunger and thirst for, it is lacking in <u>themselves</u> and in the <u>world</u> . Matthew 5:6 Blessed [are] those who <u>hunger</u> and <u>thirst</u> for <u>righteousness</u> , For they shall be filled. |
| j | וְאָכְלוּ conjunction + verb (qal, imperative, masculine, plural) אָכַל | "Each of you [all] eat!" The grain will satiate their hunger. |
| k | וּלְכוּ See c above. | "You [all] come!" |
| l | שָׁבְרוּ See i above. | "Each of you [all] buy [grain]!" |
| m | בְּלֹא- preposition + negation | "with no" or "without" |
| n | כֶּסֶף See g above. | "silver" |
| o | וּבְלֹא conjunction + preposition + negation | "and without" |
| p | מִתִּיר noun (common, masculine, singular) | "price" Equivalent value in barter, market price. The market price has not been established. It is <u>priceless</u> . Its value is <u>beyond barter</u> it cannot be bartered for. |
| q | יַיִן noun (common, masculine, singular) | "wine" Used in addition to water for its <u>refreshment value</u> . Not just water, but living water – wine! John 2 – Jesus turns water of purification into "water of the vine". Symbolic of the blood of our Lord which is priceless. Luke 22:20 Likewise He also [took] the cup after supper, saying, "This cup [is] the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. |
| r | וְחֵלֶב: conjunction + noun (common, masculine, singular) | "and milk" |

| Isaiah 55:1 | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| | | In an arid landscape, milk and wine represent longed-for luxuries and are figurative here of choicest blessings (Sos. 5:1). |

| Isaiah 55:2 | | |
|-------------|--|--|
| a | לִמָּה interrogative | "For what [reason]?" or "Why" |
| b | תִּשְׁקְלוּ- שֶׁקֶל verb (qal, imperfect, 2 nd person, masculine, plural) | "you [all] weigh out a price" or "pay money" From the root of this verb we get "shekel," used of man's valuation of Jesus. "If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned." (Exodus 21:32) Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give [me] my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty [pieces] of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter" -that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty [pieces] of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter. (Zechariah 11:12-13) |
| c | כֶּסֶף noun (common, masculine, singular) | "silver" |
| d | בְּלֹא- preposition + negation | "for [that which is] not" |
| e | לֶחֶם noun (common, masculine, singular) | "grain" or "bread," "food" or "nourishment" These spend their money for <u>things which do not nourish</u> . A typological connection—Jesus is the "bread of life" born in the "house of bread" (Bayt Lechem, or Bethlehem). John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." John 6:55 "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. John 6:56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. |

| Isaiah 55:2 | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| f וּגְיַעְכֶּם | conjunction + noun (common, masculine, singular, construct) + suffix (2 nd person, masculine, plural) | "and [the] toil of them" "and the produce/property [acquired by labor] of them" |
| g בְּלֹא | See d above. | "for [that which is] not" |
| h לְשַׂבְּעָהּ | preposition + noun (common, feminine, singular) | "unto one's fill?" "unto plenty/satiation?" |
| i שִׁמְעוּ שִׁמַּעַ | verb (qal, imperative, masculine, plural) שִׁמַּעַ | "you [all] heed/listen!" "you [all] pay attention!" A command. |
| j שִׁמְעוּ שִׁמַּעַ | verb (qal, infinitive, absolute) שִׁמַּעַ | Gives continuity to the verbal idea ¹¹ "continually listen" "listen on an ongoing basis" "listen carefully" ¹² |
| k אֵלַי | preposition + suffix (1 st person, common, singular) אֵלַי | "toward me" |
| l וְאִכְלוּ- | conjunction + verb (qal, imperative, masculine, plural) אִכְלוּ | "and eat you [all]" A command. |
| m טוֹב | noun (common, masculine, singular) | "good" "desirable" "pleasant" |

11

Martin, J. D. (1993). *Davidson's introductory Hebrew grammar*. Includes index. (27th ed.) (81). London: T&T Clark.

12

"hearken ye attentively." Gesenius, F. W. (2003). *Gesenius' Hebrew grammar* (E. Kautzsch & S. A. E. Cowley, Ed.) (2d English ed.) (343). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

| Isaiah 55:2 | | |
|-------------|--|--|
| n | וּתְתַעֲנַג conjunction + verb (hithpael, imperfect, 3 rd person, feminine, singular) עֲנַג | Intensive/reflexive = "and refresh herself" "and she ^p take exquisite delight" |
| o | בַּדְּשֵׁן preposition + article + noun (masculine, singular) דְּשֵׁן | "in the abundance/fatness" |
| p | נַפְשֵׁיכֶם: noun (feminine, singular, construct) + suffix(2 nd person, masculine, plural) | "[the] soul of you [all]" |

| Isaiah 53:3 | | |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| a | הִטּוּ noun (hiphil, imperative, masculine, plural) נִטָּה | "you [all] extend/spread out!" |
| b | אָזְנֵיכֶם noun (feminine, singular, construct) + suffix (2 nd person, masculine, plural) אֶזֶן | "the ear of you [all]" |
| c | וּלְכוּ conjunction + verb (qal, imperative, masculine, plural) הֲלֹךְ | "and you [all] come!" |
| d | אֵלַי preposition + suffix (1 st person, common, singular) | "unto me" |
| e | שְׁמַעוּ verb (qal, imperative, masculine, plural) | "you [all] listen/heed!" |
| f | וּתְחִי conjunction + verb (qal, imperfect, 3 rd person, feminine, singular) | "and she ^o shall live" |

| Isaiah 53:3 | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| g | נַפְשְׁכֶם noun (feminine, singular, construct) + suffix (2 nd person, masculine, plural) | "the soul of you [all]" |
| h | וְאַכְרַתְּהָ conjunction + verb (qal, imperfect, 1 st person, singular) כַּרְתַּ | "and I shall cut" |
| i | לְכֶם preposition)+ suffix (2 nd person, masculine, plural) | "for you [all]" |
| j | בְּרִית noun (masculine, singular) | "a covenant" |
| k | עוֹלָם noun (masculine, singular) | "[an] eternal" |
| l | חַסְדֵי noun (masculine, plural, construct) חֶסֶד | "the loving kindnesses ⁿ of" |
| m | דָּוִד noun (proper name) | "David" |
| n | הַנְּאֻמָּנִים: article + verb (niph'al, participle, masculine, plural) אֱמֵן | "the faithful [ones']" The word from which we get "Amen" ("verily," "truly"). |