Institute **Isaiah 56-59**—All **Sabbath Observers Receive A Place / Hand and Name**

CALL TO KEEP ORDIANANCES IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

56:1- To worship God, He expects us to “*keep… judgment*.” Another translation for the Hebrew word “judgment / *mishpat,*” is *ordinance* (which the root word even more strongly suggests).This fits into the whole context of this section too (vss. 5, 7). In the next phrase, God asks us to “*do justice*” or in Hebrew “*tsdaqah* / *righteousness*.” So in my translation, God asks us to *“keep the ordinances in righteousness*.” The next phrase includes “salvation / ***yshyw’ah***” which some believe is the root in the name Jesus. How is God’s salvation near? How does the Lord reveal His righteousness? In Isaiah’s time, those in Jerusalem were miraculously saved from the Assyrians’ attack, or Sennacherib’s siege, in 721 BC. God revealed His salvation or righteousness in a broader sphere with the coming of the Son of God to save the world and its inhabitants. Righteousness is another name for the Lord—or Jesus’ coming was near. How can we apply this to our own life.

***How do you see God’s salvation?***

56:2 The two target points that the Lord emphasizes indoing *justice* / righteousness are: keeping the Sabbath “*from polluting it*” and “doing any evil.” The word “pollute / *chalal*” is also translated, “defile, desecrate, treat as common.” Their Sabbath observance became the benchmark of faithfulness and membership (see vs 4, 6). The word Sabbath can be plural as well and includes all the Jewish holy days (Passover, Pentecost, Day of Atonement, etc.). Keeping the Sabbath holy was the sign of Israel’s covenant with God (Ex 31:13 reads: “for it is **a sign** between me and you . . . that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.”). As a sign of the covenant, it represents the ***whole*** thing. Also see Isaiah 58:13. Furthermore, in the context of vs. 1’s “ordinances,” the Sabbath is now a day where we partake of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of His sacrifice.

By the time of the New Testament, the Lord identified Himself as Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus was frustrated with the way the Pharisees kept the Sabbath with so many extra restrictions. They first “forty save one” forbidden forms of work on the Sabbath, and then hundreds of restrictions on each one of those: (1) sowing, (2) ploughing, (3) reaping, (4) binding sheaves, (5) threshing, (6) winnowing, (7) cleansing crops, (8) grinding, (9) sifting, (10) kneading, (11) baking, (12) shearing wool, (13) washing, (14) beating, (15) dyeing, (16) spinning, (17) weaving, (18) making two loops, (19) weaving two threads, (20) separating two threads, (21) tying [a knot], (22) loosening [a knot], (23) sewing two stitches, (24) tearing in order to sew two stitches, (25) hunting a gazelle, (26) slaughtering or (27) flaying or (28) salting, (29) curing its skin, (30) scraping it or, (31) cutting it up, (32) writing two letters, (33) erasing in order to write two letters, (34) building, (35) pulling down, (36) putting out fire, (37) lighting fire, (38) striking with the hammer, and (39) taking aught from one domain into another. Ibid*,* 7:2 (numbers added). They elaborated on each of those 39 types banned forms of labor to fill the entire second division in the (tractate of *Moed: Shabbath*). For example, the *Mishnah* forbade “carrying” on the Sabbath. So the next level of micromanagement included what was included in “carrying” (i.e., a handful of straw, a dried fig’s bulk of foodstuff, a piece of leather, enough red clay to make a seal, carrying a dead man out of his house on a couch, and biting finger nails or pulling out a hair (*Mishnah*, *Shabbath,* 7:4; 8:3, 8.5, 10.5, 6.

In contrast to this, in April 2015 Elder Nelson asks us to examine our Sabbath activities and ask if it is a sign of our covenant (https://www.lds.org/general-conference/watch/2015/04?lang=eng&vid=4155134996001&cid=11).

***\*How are your Sabbath activities a sign of your covenant?***

ALL CAN JOIN THE COVENANT through SABBATH OBSERVANCE 56:3-8

56:3-4 The Lord points out those who feel left out, outcasts, or as strangers = gentiles. As most Israelites claimed their citizenship among the chosen people through their birth right, the non-Israelites were often viewed as strangers or unprivileged. The Torah excluded some men from full church privileges, especially serving in the temple—either because of their birth, or by any ceremonial pollution (Deut 23:1). Even converts to the Law of Moses could not serve in the Temple. Only direct descendants of Aaron could act as priests. According to Isaiah though, those strangers and “eunuchs,” who have been wronged by others and left barren, may also have a place among God’s chosen in the future. By the time of Isaiah, a eunuch identified a castrated person. Biblical scholars assume that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were eunuchs chosen to serve in the Babylonian royalty (one-hundred years after Isaiah). But the Lord does not want them dwelling on the fact they are unable to reproduce, or “a dry tree.” He asks them to not complain—because he promises them that they will have the equivalent of “a memorial and a name” —even without seed.

56:4 This verse is like an “IF . .. THEN statement.” These eternal blessing available to the Mosaic “outcasts,” are conditional for all recipients, IF THEY KEEP THE SABBATH to do those things that “please” God. This has powerful implications for those currently who feel as outcasts and single in the church.

56:5 The Lord speaks of His house, so look for Temple promises here. In KJV, the word “**place** /*yad,*” is most often translated as “a hand” or on occasion, “monument / sign.” Most modern translators use monument because hand or sign doesn’t make sense to them. In context, God promises if we keep His commandments and enter His House / Temple, then he will give us a His **hand** and a **name** that will not be cut off.

56:6 By the time of Isaiah, all converts who were willing to obey God, could serve Him. This is true today where the Lord, has no regard to one’s birthright or genealogy or race or resume

***\*How would you teach the meaning “hold of my covenant”?***

56:7-8 All are welcomed to worship in the “*holy mountain*” or Temple if they are willing to keep the Sabbath—without polluting it, and take hold of the covenant. I love the message that the Temple is to be a joyful house of prayer. OT Temple worship included keeping incense burning day and night to represent prayer (Ex 30:8). At 3:00 pm the priests rekindled the incense and referred to it as the “hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1; Dan 9:21). Jesus quotes Isaiah when he cleanses the Temple, “My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mt 21:11). Thanks to vicarious Temple ordinances, God can love and bless ALL we outcasts who come to Him.

GOD’S ACCUSATION AGAINST THE WICKED 56:9-12

56:9-10 Isaiah abruptly turns to describe spiritually blind leaders. He calls them beasts, blind watchmen and “*dumb dogs*” who can’t bark. We get a view of Isaiah’s society with this description. Dogs often referred to unworthy reprobates (Ps 22:16; Deut 23:17-18; Matt 15:23-28; Rev 22:14).What responsibilities of a watchman do you have? How do you avoid the problems? These verses (9-12) could be gentiles who reject the gospel and seek others to reject it, or perhaps a momentary about Israel’s leaders at the time.

56:11 Rather than warn their people of danger, these wicked leaders sleep and fill their thoughts with greed. The problem is they can’t be satisfied. Selfishness leaves one empty (while self**less**ness fills one with peace and love). Insensitive shepherds can’t understand (in opposition to the Good Shepherd).

56:12 The self-focused generation fills their appetites with as much as they can, and expects no retribution.

**57—NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED, so ENTER INTO GOD’S PEACE (***find the chiasmus*)

57:1-2 Isaiah again contrasts the righteous (who enjoy peace and confidence) and the wicked (who receive turmoil and trouble). The righteous do not fear death but peacefully pass into death.

57:3-5 In this description of the wicked, I fear our generation doesn’t recognize our worship of idols, nor the damage that is inflicted on children. Pagan sexual rituals were conducted under oak trees. They also practiced child sacrifice under Molech and Baal. High places or spreading oaks were often used for pagan worship.

57:6-8 The image of adultery is used for idolatry because figuratively, the covenant people are married to God, so those who leave His worship become adulterers.

57:9 Note the footnote for king. *Molech* was a Canaanite god associated with child sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5).

57:13 If God loves all his children, why will the wicked not receive peace?

CONFORT FOR THE CONTRITE

57:13b God changes direction to promise the faithful a clear view from the Temple/Mt., of their inheritance. “*Trust*”=faith

57:14-15 The Lord removes our stumbling blocks and revives our contrite hearts.

57:16-18 The Lord promises healing after periods of trial. Just like D&C 121:7-8, His wrath is purposely short.

57:19-21 The Lord shares peace with the righteous, but there is no peace for the wicked (remember Lehi’s filthy water?).

17—Isaiah 56-57

1) How would you teach the meaning of the phrase to take “hold of my covenant” in 56:6?

2) What responsibilities of a watchman do you have?

3) How do you avoid the problems in 56:9-10?

**Isa 58: WHEREFORE WE HAVE FASTED, SABBATHED& SINNED**

FASTING (This is the best chapter in all the Standard Works on fasting)

The Lord approaches this very logically. He is good at showing a cause and effect.

* First He tells you what they are doing wrong (58:1-5)
* Then what they need to do right (58:6-7)
* Finally, what they can expect (58:8-11)

58:1-3a The Lord wants his children to see the cause and effect between their transgression and problem sarcasm to show the Jews their hypocrisy. When the wicked fast, they make their life painful for all around them. Their self-aggrandizement that they promote. This type of fasting would take one further from God rather than closer to Him.

58:3b-5 The Lord’s answer begins half way through vs. 3, “*Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure . . .*” This is a good barometer for our Sabbath worship—are doing our will or the Lord’s will on Sundays? The Lord denounces their short tempers, debate, and feigned physical sacrifice. (Jews used to put powder or dirt on their face to look sick when they fasted too.) How do we know what labors we need to remove from our fast days? Clearly the Lord does not want our fasting to be a passive act. He disapproves of insincerely going through the motions. The Lord sees a huge difference between going hungry and a meaningful fast.

58:6-7 Now comes Isaiah’s ideas for a proper fast. This can be life changing if we follow the Lord’s counsel. The verbs, loose, undo, break, all represent an increased power of repentance through turning our appetites over to God. Have you experienced God’s blessings from a proper fast? Proper fasting conquers physical desire through building spiritual power. God will help us if we do what he outlines in vs. 7. God asks us to accompany our fasting with charity and righteous living. We must combine self-control with God’s purpose. The last word in vs. 7 refers to one’s own family, or lineage.

58:8 The light that breaks forth will come in the morning of the resurrection, when health and strength returns to our bodies. Spiritual light allows understanding—light and truth (D&C 93:28-29). Like the sun rise, our spiritual understanding grows to dispel darkness and completely illuminate truth. The Lord becomes “our righteousness” that goes before us as a breast plate, and then God will protect our backside if we fast. God is saying, “I’ve got your back.” Another definition of *“Rereward /* *asaph*”is “gather.” Thus the Lord gathers the scattered rear of His army, keeping it from straggling and defending it from enemies (Institute, 205)

58:10-12 We can easily communicate with God—speaking and hearing—if and when our fasting follows His guidelines. His blessings will be like a watered growing, productive, garden with a natural spring. Fasting can act like a builder who repairs breaks and returns to its beautiful state.

SABBATH

58:13 How does this verse teach us to evaluate our Sabbath observance? Rather than writing a list of dos and don’ts, we can evaluate if we are doing and speaking the Lord’s will vs. our own pleasure. When we honor the Lord by doing His will, not our own, we will find it a holy day of the Lord.

58:14 When we think of the Sabbath as a day of rest, like a day to sleep in and take a nap, we are missing the higher meaning of rest. Rest from personal labors to find the eternal rest of the Lord—which often is the antithesis of laying around relaxing. “*High Places”*  refer to sites of revelation (i.e. Sinai and temples). The “*heritage of Jacob*” is to receive exaltation (D&C 132:37).

**Isa 59—Your Iniquities Separate You from God—**This chapter returns to warn Israel of the judgment to come.

EVIL AND OPPRESSION

59:1-2 God’s power is not diminished. His hand is extended in mercy and in justice. The images of his hands in Isaiah are often symbolic of his atonement and love. He does not withdraw from us, instead, it is our own iniquities that separate us from God. God’s scathing rebuke of wickedness outlines what the people have done wrong.

59:3-4 In contrast to God’s merciful hands, human hands are defiled with sins. Isaiah lists the sins of the people that have estranged them from God—hands and fingers used for iniquity, mischief, vanity, lies, iniquity, lack of justice, trust in the wrong sources, etc.

59:5 I love his image of a cockatrice or adder (in modern English). This snake is tremendously poisonous. Unlike most snakes whose poison grows as they age, the poison in adders comes immediately, even as an infant. Their poison causes immediate death. Yet some careless people seem to play with sin by taking the poisonous egg and keeping it warm in their front pocket, allowing it to hatch. But as soon as the egg hatches, the snake bites and the victim is immediately poisoned—causing spiritual death. This sounds like those who return to pornography or other addictions. This is a warning against the serious nature of spiritual death that comes from sin. They should kill the snake, it’s eggs, children, and adults as soon as they see it. ***\*What cockatrice eggs are you incubating?***

59:6-7 Rather than using their time to create something, they waste their days on wickedness. Just like the Lord does in the sermon on the Mount, Isaiah includes evil thoughts as sins that take us from God.

59:8 “The way of peace” is a beautiful image using the broader interpretation of “shalom.” The ancient Hebrews use the word, *shalom,* as a common greeting, but it means more of a peaceful being. It is peace in your personal environment of your being. It’s not political or national, but personal.

59:9-11 Sorrow and groping come when from not recognizing a sinful lifestyle or thought processes. But the wicked will have to pay the consequence of their iniquity. Judgments will come, they are going to roar like bears, etc.

59:12 We will be accountable for all our sins (but if we repent we won’t have to suffer for them—D&C 19:15-17). We will all end up at the judgment bar where we understand all our sins for what they are—guilt will be clear at that time (also see 2 Nephi 9). The guilt and sorrow will be horrific. But that clear sight will bring more humility and gratitude for those who repented (returned, forsook their sins).

JUDGEMENT AND REDEMPTION

59:13 What does it mean to lie against the Lord? How does our culture speak oppression? Why do we conceive falsehoods?

59:14-15 This sounds like our day. Truth is no longer recognized nor respected as truth. . . sound familiar?

59:16 Although no one is righteous enough, except One, I hope when the Lord looks now, he will be able to see some who will help! We can always depend on our intercessor, Jesus. To follow his example, we too must develop righteousness.

ARMOR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

59:17-20 Ephesians 6:11-17 uses Isaiah’s ideas here on the armor of righteousness. The Lord responds to our choices—the wicked to His fury, and the repentant to find salvation. Depending on our choices in life, we will find our God acting as either an Avenger or Redeemer. Paul paraphrases vs. 17 in 1 Thes 5:8. We put on HOPE through the salvation of Christ’s divine gifts

CONCLUSION

59:21 The righteous keep their covenants—God will be either the revenger or the redeemer depending on how we choose to use our agency.