

GOD'S WAYS AND GOD'S THOUGHTS
Isaiah 55:8-13

Intro: There is probably no statement in Scripture regarding the ways of God which is more important for us to know than that which Isaiah has given to us in these two verses. Even we as believers get into trouble because we do not understand what the Lord was saying here. We expect the Lord to do things the way we would do them, and, when He does not, we either get confused or discouraged or rebellious--or sometimes, all three!

The statements of verses 8 and 9 go far beyond what is meant in the context, and apply to many other things, as the Word of God plainly shows, but, for the present, let us deal with the context.

There is no question but that, when we consider the context, these verses have reference to the Gospel. Notice Isa. 55:1-7. Verse 8 is related to verse 7 by the word, "For." And the theme has actually been the same since verse 1: the Gospel.

So let us talk about these verses in relation to the Gospel and to the whole work of salvation.

But first we need to understand . . .

I. THE MEANING OF "THOUGHTS" AND "WAYS."

A. "Thoughts."

This is a word which describes a purpose or a plan--something which has been very carefully thought out, and determined in great detail.

This is the way in which salvation has been described. God, in His infinite wisdom, has carefully thought it all out, has planned it in every detail. And He is very capable to doing what He has ordained shall be done. He has left nothing out.

B. "Ways."

This word has reference to how He is going to carry out His plans. It has reference to His manner of action, the methods, or methods, that He will employ to carry out His plan.

Now let us notice . . .

II. THE MESSAGE OF VERSES 8 AND 9.

There are three things that we need to realize.

A. God has thoughts, and He has ways.

This means that He has a carefully laid out, a detailed plan, which He devised, for the salvation of men.

The Scriptures make it clear that it is not something He came up with after the sin of Adam, but it was planned before creation--"before the world began": (2 Tim. 1:9). (Read it.)

Cf. Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Tit. 1:1, 2; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; Rev. 13:8; 17:8.

We learned a great deal about God's plan from Isa. 52:13-53:12. We saw that this plan was dependent upon the Servant of the Lord Who was yet to come, and that it would be through His death that sinners would be justified in God's sight.

The revelation of God's plan, God's thoughts about salvation, are given progressively throughout the Word of God.

And with His plan He has also devised a way for accomplishing what He planned to do.

Secondly,

B. God's thoughts and ways are not like man would have done.

Man was not even God's consultant. We learned that about creation back in Isa. 40:13, 14.

Paul took those words from Isaiah 40 and applied them to salvation in Rom. 11:34. (Read Rom. 11:33-36.)

We could say a lot about the way man would have planned salvation because of what we see man trying to do today, and from the objections that even believers raise against what God has done.

Man does not like the idea of election--that God has decided in His plan who is going to be saved.

Man does not like to be told that it is necessary for God to draw man to Himself.

Man does not like to hear that he has been so completely ruined by sin that there is nothing that he can contribute to salvation.

Neither does man like the teaching that, if he is truly

saved, he will show it in his life.

Isa. 55:8, 9 tell us that man is going to object to practically every detail of salvation--even to the very vital point that salvation can only be obtained through Christ.

Thirdly,

- C. God's thoughts and ways are "higher" than anything that man could have planned.

The distance between the two is ^{likened to} the immeasurable distance between heaven and earth.

My grandson, Will, was asked just recently where heaven is. And he said very honestly, "I don't know." Do you? The Lord Jesus went up, but He went up from the other side of the earth.

Do you suppose that heaven is up from any place on earth?

But what if Isaiah was simply talking about this universe of ours. Man acknowledges that we have only explored the very fringes of it. Then how great must our salvation be. Is it not wonderful that man did not plan it, or that salvation is not what man would have made it, and would like for it to be?

"Higher" means majestic, grand, wonderful, exalted.

Think of the completeness of our salvation--it includes the forgiveness of all our sins.

Think of the destiny of our salvation: We are to be conformed to the very likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!!!

This third part leads to the rest of the chapter, telling us even more about the majesty, the glory, the greatness of God's ways and thoughts. Two things are emphasized. What are they?

III. THE METHOD OF SALVATION (Isa. 55:8, 9).

It is illustrated by nature--which ought to understand here in Oregon. See v. 10.

God's method of bringing salvation has to do with the ministry of His Word.

And here is the wonderful part, and it should encourage all of us to realize that this is true:

- 1) It never goes out in vain.
- 2) It always accomplishes that which the Lord intends for it to accomplish--that which is according to His plan.

This is most important to know. We do not save people, any more than some other person saved us. But it is our place to give the Word; it is the Lord's part to use it as He sees fit--again, according to His plan.

IV. THE MEASURE OF SALVATION (Isa. 55:12, 13).

How extensive is the work of salvation?

I have already said that we will be like Christ. That would be wonderful enough. But what is being emphasized here?

Isaiah was talking about God's plan for the renovation of the earth which now bears the marks of the curse because of man's sin.

Note how Paul dealt with this subject in Rom. 8, vv. 18-22.

Concl: Now do you see why man objects to the doctrines of the grace of God in salvation. Because it is entirely different from the way man would have planned it.

And it seems that we can say, different in all of its parts--that at no point is it like what man would have done.

But man is blinded to his own helplessness,
to the holiness of God,
to the extent of his own corruption,
to what is required to bring man to salvation,
and then what is required to keep him saved.

How thankful we should be for the salvation that God planned, that He planned it at all, that He planned all of it, and that by His ways He is prepared to carry out in detail everything that He ordained should be done!