

THE LORD--SOUGHT AND FOUND  
Isaiah 65:1-16

Intro: Our study of the Pentateuch on Sunday mornings (which we concluded this morning) has led many of you to ask, "Was anyone in Israel really saved?"

A study of the OT prophets should provoke the same kind of a question.

In the Pentateuch it seems like Moses and Aaron stood alone. The prophets had very little encouragement. Even the kings were often against them. They were marked men, treated often as traitors because of the way they predicted God's judgment upon Israel and Judah.

And all of this raises a far more serious question: "What about the purposes of God in such a situation? It looks as though God is helpless against such opposition."

I am sure that it is passages like this which have given rise to much of the Arminian teaching. This looks like a perfect illustration of the free will of man, and a contradiction of the absolute sovereignty of God.

But let us not jump to conclusions too fast. We need to examine all of the evidence given to us in the Word of God.

Isaiah was enabled to be both a forthteller and a foreteller in this passage--and it went to a theme which as far as its title is concerned, was laid to rest until Peter wrote 2 Peter and John wrote the Book of the Revelation: the "new heavens" and the "new earth" (Isa. 65:17).

Thus we can understand now that Isaiah in this passage was taking a long, comprehensive look at the end times.

Let me give you the outline of these 16 verses, and you will see what I mean.

The Outline:

- I. The Salvation of the Gentiles (v. 1).
- II. The Condemnation of the Jews (vv. 2-7).
- III. The Faithfulness of God to His Elect (vv. 8-10).
- IV. The Final Judgment of the Condemned (vv. 11-16).

Romans 10:20, 21 show that Isaiah here was clearly anticipating the widespread ministry among the Gentiles which began immediately after the ascension of Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But, if you are concerned about the sovereignty of God in salvation, note the positive words which

Isaiah used 700 years before they actually began to be fulfilled!  
See v. 1 of Isa. 65.

In regard to the question that many of you have been asking about Israel, if our questions are not cleared up by this chapter (and they should be), then remember what Paul taught in Rom. 9 about God's purpose for Israel, and just who was included when we speak of Israel. Cf. Rom. 9:6-8. See also Rom. 2:28, 29.

The answer is that God had an elect people in Israel, just as He has an elect people among the nations of the earth today--and these are the ones who will without any doubt be saved.

But the question comes up then, "Why preach the Gospel?"

And the answer is, "So that people everywhere may hear the Gospel and be saved IF they believe."

Does God deal with even the non-elect in the preaching of the Gospel? Are God's purposes being fulfilled? Look at vv. 1, 2.

#### I. THE SALVATION OF THE GENTILES (Isa. 65:1).

Remember here Isaiah spoke as a foreteller of the future, and yet he does it as something that had already been accomplished!

"Sought" speaks of those who make a diligent, tireless search into the things of God. It could be illustrated very accurately by Cornelius in Acts 10. When the Jews were doing all that they could to oppose the Gospel, here was a houseful of Gentiles seeking God.

Previously the Gentiles had shown no such interest on a large scale, but now it is different. Why? Because God had effectually said to them, "Behold me, behold me"--and they began to seek the Lord!

Far from denying the sovereignty of God, here is a perfect illustration of the irresistible grace of God. God says, "Behold me," and they do it, not against their will, but because God has moved upon their will to do so.

Note, too, that a sinners interest in the Gospel begins with the contemplation of God. That is when we begin to understand, our own hearts, and the rightfulness of divine judgment.

But notice the next section:

#### II. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE JEWS (Isa. 65:2-7).

Here you have a good picture of the depravity of the human

heart. Here you can see why salvation has to be of the the Lord.

But I asked a little while ago, "Does God deal with the non-elect?" Of course He does. Otherwise you would not have the preaching of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. What God does is vividly described in verse 2.

To spread out the hands is a term that is used:

- 1) Of an orator.
- 2) Of a mother.
- 3) Of some benefactor.

And "all the day" means continually, day after day. You will remember that Jeremiah used that expression, "rising early."

But what did this people do, blessed as no other nation ever was with the ministry of the Word? See the answer in verses 2-7. It is a vivid portrayal of the human heart: exposed to the light, men will prefer the darkness of sin.

But what does that do to the purposes of God? Did He not make some unconditional, unchangeable promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

All right, notice:

### III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (Isa. 65:8-10).

We now see that the answer to the riddle of Israel is found in the doctrine of election.

The nation as a whole was deserving of judgment, and it would have been extinguished by God IF it had not been that His purposes were bound up in His elective choice of those sinners whom He intended to save.

You see, if God had left even Israel alone, no one would have come to Him! How could Isaiah have made it any clearer?

See and read vv. 8 and 9.

In verse 10 Sharon is where David kept his flocks; Achor is the rich territory where Achan had been killed. Both of these areas were devastated by the judgment of God, but the day was coming when they would again flourish.

All that remains before Isaiah began to speak of the eternal state was his revelation concerning . . .

### IV. THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE CONDEMNED (Isa. 65:11-16).

God called and God spake, but they did not hear, nor did

accept the message of His prophets. They were not content with the Word; they wanted signs, signs, signs--as Paul told the Corinthians! They despised the faithful prophets. They did not know that eternal issues were involved. They did that which looked best to them for the preservation of their own lives. They sought to gain the world, but they lost their souls!

Notice how this fits into the context of that period described many places in the Bible--the time of suffering which will be worse than all preceding times of suffering.

Are not verses 12 through 16 descriptive of what hell will be like, as compared with the blessings of the new heavens and the new earth?

This is the perseverance of the saints. God will have a people who will be faithful to Him through the most difficult circumstances--who will go hungry in life that they may eat later, who will be thirsty now but who will drink eternally from the fountain of life, who will suffer shame now, that they may rejoice forever, who will experience sorrow and vexation in this life that they may sing in eternity, who will, in the coming day, bless themselves in the God of truth, the faithful God, when all of the former things are passed away!

Concl: How fitting it is that on the last Sunday night of this year we should come to a passage which so clearly expounds the doctrines of God's sovereign, matchless grace!

We have been able to see in the Word of God and throughout present-day history, the fulfillment of Isaiah's words. And the rest shall be fulfilled. Peter believed Isaiah. John believed Isaiah. And, although hundreds of years separated them from Isaiah, yet they knew that what Isaiah said would surely come to pass.

God cannot fail. His purposes cannot fail. Therefore, let us be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel of His grace. Men will still reject it. But here and there God will be saying, "Behold me, behold me," and when He does, people will look to Him, and to Christ, and be saved!