

Israel is still God's people. Although erring, and deserving severe rebuke and chastisement, there is still a grand future in store for them. This latter part of chapter 65 shows the great blessings that are ahead for all of God's people, both Jews and Gentiles, after the end of the present age of trouble.

As we have seen, the moving prayer which runs from Isaiah 63:7 to 64:12 contains a very urgent and pathetic plea that God's favor would return to His people, but it contains no expression of true penitence for sin or of desire to put God first in the life and thought of those who are praying. It is consequently not at all surprising to find chapter 65 beginning, not with promises of blessing, but with declarations of rebuke.

Upon careful reading of the prayer one could not but be impressed with two ideas: First, that it was necessary that God should render some rebuke and punishment for the failure to assume a proper attitude toward Him. Second, that surely God would not desert His covenant people but would bring to fruition the great promises He had given them. It is natural, then, to expect to find two different emphases in the following chapter. In chapter 65, verses 1-15 are predominantly filled with declarations of punishment and rebuke against those who are disobedient to God, while verses 16-25 are almost entirely made up of great promises of blessing to His people.

In the first section of the chapter (vv. 1-15), we find repeated use of contrast. Verses 1 and 2 bring this contrast into sharp relief, and it is constantly stressed in verses 13 and 15. We cannot properly understand verse 1 unless we look back to the previous prayer, which rests upon the basis that those who were praying were God's people. In 63:19 they say: "We are thine; thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." In 65:1 God answers: "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." God cannot be ordered to give His favor only to certain people who have been called by His name in the past. It is His desire to extend His blessing to the whole earth.