

# ISAIAH

## Chapter 66

### *Judgment and Hope*

This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? <sup>2</sup> Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. <sup>3</sup> But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig’s blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol. They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations; <sup>4</sup> so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me.” <sup>5</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: “Your brothers who hate you, and exclude you because of my name, have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy!’ Yet they will be put to shame. <sup>6</sup> Hear that uproar from the city, hear that noise from the temple! It is the sound of the LORD repaying his enemies all they deserve. <sup>7</sup> “Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. <sup>8</sup> Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children. <sup>9</sup> Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?” says the LORD. “Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery?” says your God. <sup>10</sup> “Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. <sup>11</sup> For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance.” <sup>12</sup> For this is what the LORD says: “I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. <sup>13</sup> As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.” <sup>14</sup> When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes. <sup>15</sup> See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. <sup>16</sup> For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the LORD. <sup>17</sup> “Those who consecrate and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following the one in the midst of<sup>a</sup> those who eat the flesh of pigs and rats and other abominable things—they will meet their end together,” declares the LORD. <sup>18</sup> “And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. <sup>19</sup> “I will set a sign among them,

**and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations.** <sup>20</sup> **And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels,” says the LORD. “They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels.** <sup>21</sup> **And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites,” says the LORD.** <sup>22</sup> **“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.** <sup>23</sup> **From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD.** <sup>24</sup> **“And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.”**

**Ch 66** The burning of Jerusalem by the Babylonians becomes a small-scale model of the unquenchable fire when the Lord will “enter into judgment … with all flesh” (vv 16, 24). Conversely, the return of captive Israel becomes the prophetic symbol of a universal movement when “all flesh shall come to worship” before the Lord (v 23). (TLSB)

**66:1** *throne … footstool.* See 40:22 and note. (CSB)

God cannot be locked up within walls. Cf Mt 5:34–37. Is 6:1 gives a similar view of the Lord, where the edge of His garment fills the temple. Yet, the One who is high and lifted up condescends to be enshrined in the heart of everyone who is “of a contrite and lowly spirit” (57:15). (TLSB)

Is 66:1 resonates with Solomon’s dedicatory prayer in 1 Kings 8. Since heaven is unable to contain Yahweh, how can this temple (1 Ki 8:27)? While acknowledging that heaven itself is Yahweh’s dwelling place (1 Ki 8:30, 39, 43, 49), Solomon rejoices that Yahweh has caused his name to dwell in the temple (1 Ki 8:12–13, 29; cf. Ex 13:21; 19:16; 40:34). God intended Moses’ tabernacle, and then Solomon’s temple, to be a microcosm of the universe (Pss 11:4; 78:69). It was the incarnational dwelling place for Yahweh’s glory, which is also on display throughout the world (Ps 19:1). Yahweh reigns both in the heavens above and on the earth below (Deut 4:39; Josh 2:11; 1 Ki 8:23; Pss 93:1; 99:1). He has made the totality of creation for his home. This is what Amos sees (Amos 9:6), and it is similar to the vision Jacob has in Gen 28:12. (CC)

*Where is the house … ?* Solomon realized that God could not be localized in a man-made temple, magnificent though it may be (1Ki 8:27). (CSB)

Reminiscent of the Lord’s words to David through Nathan concerning the building of the temple in Jerusalem (2Sm 7:5–7). (TLSB)

The answers to these questions are “nowhere” and “anywhere.” Yahweh is making three interrelated claims: (1) he has the power to create everything; (2) he already has provided the

place in which he deigns to dwell; and (3) by identifying the divine “footstool” as “the earth,” against the usage of Zion or its temple in such contexts (Pss 99:5; 132:7; Lam 2:1; 1 Chr 28:2), he subtly shifts the focus from Jerusalem to the cosmic temple of all creation. “ ‘Do I myself not fill the heavens and the earth?’ the utterance of Yahweh” (Jer 23:24). Commenting on Is 66:1, Luther writes: “God is inside, outside, below, above the world. He sits outside of heaven and has His feet on the earth. That is, He sits on all creatures.” The Reformer employs this idea in his treatise *This Is My Body*: (CC)

**66:2** *made all these things.* See 40:26 and note. (CSB)

*humble and contrite.* See 57:15 and note. (CSB)

The Lord repeats the desire for actions that stem from contrite hearts (cf Mt 5:3–4; Lk 18:13–14). (TLSB)

**66:3** Cf. Isaiah’s harsh words about ineffective sacrifices in 1:11–14. (CSB)

*slaughters … kills.* The use of prescribed offerings (ox, lamb, grain, memorial) as a magical device to immobilize the Lord is as abhorrent to Him as sacrificing human beings or unclean animals such as dogs and swine. Archaeologists have discovered remains of sacrifices at Haror, including birds, puppies, donkeys, and a person.

I could not speak more cruelly against the worship of God. “To slaughter an ox seems to you to be the most important thing. I consider it to be manslaughter.” Why does God do this, that He compares it with the worst kind of disgraceful act? He compares it with the grossest kind of sin so that the common people will understand. It is even worse than manslaughter, because the hypocrites make God a beggar and deny that God is God. To sacrifice an ox according to nature is the highest sacrifice and work. “This to Me is like murder.” Why? “Because you overlook the addition and condition of the promise. You pay no attention to the Word and the commandments, you have no need of Me, you do not acknowledge Me as a helper, and then you come with your sacrifice.” (Luther)

*breaks a dog’s neck.* The dog was “unclean” and not used in offerings. Cf. the law about breaking a donkey’s neck in Ex 13:13. (CSB)

A dog is an unclean animal and could not be offered as a sacrifice. Therefore, being an unclean animal, it was rated as the lowest in value. “Am I a dog?” (1 Sam. 17:43; cf. Matt. 15:26 f.). Puppies. It was an abomination to offer a dog as a sacrifice. They all knew this, and yet God prefers this abomination to their righteousness and sacrifice. It is as if He said, “I repudiate your highest righteousness more than the worst of all sins.” (Luther)

*pig’s blood.* See 65:4 and note. The dog and pig are mentioned together also in Mt 7:6; 2Pe 2:22. (CSB)

The swine is an unclean animal in itself. A second abomination is its blood. To offer swine's blood is therefore a twofold and an extreme abomination. Here you see that God prefers the worst kind of unrighteousness and abomination to the highest form of religion. (Luther)

*worships an idol.* See 44:19 and note. (CSB)

*abominations.*† Idols (see Jer 4:1). (CSB)

To choose means not only to determine but also to judge that a thing is valuable, and on account of this feeling they are so blinded that they see nothing else and know of no other way than "their own ways." (Luther)

**66:4** *choose harsh treatment.* Cf. 65:7. (CSB)

I will repay them. I will likewise mock them." Thus we read in Deut. 32:21: "I will provoke them with a foolish nation," and in Ps. 18:26: "With the crooked Thou dost show Thyself perverse." What they despise shall in turn despise them. Those nations and chief sinners are accepted, while they are cast aside. Read about it in the Gospel. Jesus received Magdalene, the centurion, Matthew, and others, so that He had the name "Friend of tax collectors" (Luke 7:34). (Luther)

*bring their fears upon them.* Physical and mental punishment. (TLSB)

*For when ... displeases me.* For these last four lines see 65:12 and note. (CSB)

*I called.* Through the prophets. (TLSB)

**66:5–6** The Lord reminds the remnant that He will repay their enemies, who are also His enemies. This passage of assurance culminates with a threefold call to listen to the voice from the city, the voice from the temple, and the voice of the Lord as He repays His enemies. (TLSB)

**66:5** *tremble.* See v. 2. (CSB)

Until now this has been a threat against the ungodly. Now he consoles the godly, the little poor people who have an afflicted conscience, fear God and His Word, and then, being in a state of affliction, are in terror. (Luther)

*Your brothers.* Fellow Israelites (see Ac 22:1). (CSB)

Brethren who hate the devout are so degenerate that they blasphemously challenge Him to vindicate His honor and to bring joy to those suffering for His "name's sake." (TLSB)

*Let ... joy.* Apparently spoken sarcastically, much like 5:19; Ps 22:8. (CSB)

**66:6** *city*. Probably Jerusalem. (CSB)

Here the prophet states the reason for the disorder. There will be a turbulent voice in the city, introduced in the temple by God Himself through the Romans. When the Jews persecuted the apostles and put their trust in the Law, God sounded a turbulent voice in the city—war outside and revolt and uproar inside; the government collapsed inside, and everything was laid waste outside. It is as if He were saying, “For that blasphemy I will send them a great deal of unrest into city and temple.” As you know, the Romans waged war in the temple. (Luther)

*repaying his enemies.* See 59:18 and note; 65:6–7. (CSB)

This is a clear statement concerning this uproar, because you know that the prophet is here speaking about the reign of Christ and the rejection of the Jews. For that reason this passage is predicting disaster for the beloved and chosen Jewish people, for the city of Jerusalem and the temple itself, as if He were saying, “I will repudiate and condemn them bodily.” Their worship and religion must be destroyed, and the entire external worship will perish with the spiritual. Stone and wood will be destroyed at the same time. Therefore this disaster has to do with the highly religious Jews. (Luther)

**66:1–6** The Lord delights in those who are humble and contrite in spirit. But those who pursue self-chosen ways will be put to shame. Even the offerings they outwardly present to the Lord are regarded by Him as abominations. Although the glory of the Lord spans both heaven and earth, God Himself dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ. He became the sacrificial Lamb of God, whose death atoned for all our sins. • Lord Jesus Christ, by Your Holy Spirit create in us humble and contrite hearts, that we might tremble at Your Word and gladly hear and learn it. Amen. (TLSB)

**66:7–9** The Lord here is not speaking of human birth but of how suddenly Zion’s glory will return to her (cf 49:19–50:3; 54:1). (TLSB)

**66:7** *Before ... labor.* See 54:1 (and note), where Zion was barren. (CSB)

So the church looks barren to the world, as if she would never bring forth but rather would be brought down in the midst of death and afflictions. There seems to be nothing here but barrenness, and yet, contrary to expectation, offspring are born out of that barrenness. (Luther)

**66:8** *country ... born in a day.* See 49:19–20 and note. (CSB)

These questions show the astonishing, impossible nature of God’s restoration of Israel. (TLSB)

**66:9** *moment of birth.* See 37:3 and note. (CSB)

God has prepared Israel for rebirth; surely He will deliver her. (TLSB)

**66:10-11** The Lord commends comfort to the ones in anguish over the state of Jerusalem and those who will mourn her destruction (Ezk 9:4). (TLSB)

**66:10** *Rejoice ... be glad.* See 65:18 and note. (CSB)

Such good things are in store for Jerusalem, that in the last analysis which includes the church of the NT, that when they who wish her well consider the situation, they will be moved to rejoice and be jubilant. This includes those who mourned over her when her lot in life was a less happy one. (Leupold)

The church has always been the gathering of believers. Scripture refers to that gathering as “Jerusalem” and “Zion.” The Lord addressed his believers and encouraged them to rejoice. They were to rejoice at the birth and transformation of Jerusalem. The Lord promised that the church would reemerge and the NT era would dawn with glorious and gracious light. (PBC)

*all ... who love her.* Cf. Ps 137:6. (CSB)

The faithful inhabitants and friendly peoples. (TLSB)

*who mourn.* See 57:19; 61:2 and notes. (CSB)

Through the ages, believers have encountered sorrow as they witnessed the troubles of the church. Those in Isaiah’s day saw the hypocrisy, unbelief, and idolatry among their own people. Such realities troubled them deeply. When they saw the Assyrians destroy the Northern Kingdom and invade Judah, they mourned. Later their hearts melted as the Babylonians carried believers and unbelievers away as captive. They mourned because they knew that the sins of God’s people had brought about the exile. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of its unbelief (Luke 19:41). The church has been persecuted over the centuries and believers still suffer for their faith in Jesus. We note the erosion of morality and the abandonment of the gospel of Jesus Christ by so many in our own age. We too mourn over the condition of the visible church. The church on earth remains a faithful little flock battered and ridiculed by the world and even by some who claim to be Christian. Yet even the very gates of hell will not triumph over the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18). (PBC)

**66:11** Jerusalem is a mother to the nation and its inhabitants. See “daughters of Zion,” (TLSB)

*nurse and be satisfied.* In 60:16 (see note there) Jerusalem was drinking the milk of nations. Here she is the mother (cf. v. 12; 49:23). (CSB)

Jerusalem, the church, is “the mother” of true believers; and from her, under God, they are nourished unto everlasting life. Gal. 4:26 (CB)

Here is the spot where true satisfaction is to be found. The true satisfaction that a healthy and normal child enjoys at its mother's breast is very meaningful and instructive. There is no more healthy food to found for infants. (Leupold)

The gathering of believers will find nourishment, comfort, and abundance for their souls. The gospel will give believers all the comfort they need. Peter wrote, "Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2). Luther wrote: "The church's glory is the cross which remains despised and wicked in the eyes of the world. Yet through the Holy Spirit the breasts of the church comfort many hearts with peace and the security of faith" (LW, Volume 17, page 408). As believers have gathered together, they have found strength through the gospel in Word and Sacrament. God has richly nourished the church through the means of grace and will continue to satisfy his saints during the difficulties and tears of their earthly pilgrimage. (PBC)

**66:12** *peace ... like a river.* See 48:18 and note. (CSB)

Peace and glory will overflow without end. (TLSB)

Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). The peace of forgiveness flows to the church and through the church. That peace comes from God. The angels announced it at the birth of Jesus. (PBC)

*wealth of nations.* See 60:5 and note. (CSB)

The Gentiles will bring into the church their power, their intellectual gifts, and all their resources. The church will benefit from all the best the nations have to offer. (PBC)

*flooding stream.* Contrast the destructive flood of 8:7–8 (see note there). (CSB)

Floods usually conjure up pictures of destruction. But they can also be beneficial. The Mississippi River brings much rich soil from the north and central United States and deposits it in the delta near New Orleans.

*on her arm.* See 40:11. (CSB)

**66:13** *comforted over Jerusalem.* See 49:13 and note. Cf. 2Co 1:3–4. (CSB)

The Lord speaks with the nurturing image of v 11. (TLSB)

Isaiah's prophecy drips with comfort and beauty. The Lord will take his people and carry them and tenderly rock them as a mother rocks her small child on her knees. The Lord himself promises such comfort and care. No wonder he encourages us to rejoice. (PBC)

**66:14 WHEN YOU SEE THIS** – All these good things will not be idle dreams. Israel shall see them with her own eyes. The happiness caused by the experience shall go deep down into the very marrow of her bones. It shall be obvious to all who share in the event that God has once again had a hand in the course that things took, the hand of the Lord has been at work, in behalf of his servants. (Leupold)

*heart will rejoice.* See 60:5. (CSB)

You will see it. If you believe, you will not only hear but also experience it. This will truly come to pass. In trial we reluctantly grasp the Word, and our faith is weak. But while faith lasts, it grows so that the person can eventually say, “See how God has carried me in His arms.” (Luther)

*grass.* Usually a symbol of weakness. See 37:27 and note; 51:12; but contrast 44:4. (CSB)

The opposite of the imagery Isaiah has used to show the facility of people. (TLSB)

*hand of the LORD.* Cf. Ezr 7:9; 8:31. (CSB)

*servants.* See 54:17 and note. (CSB)

*fury.* See v. 15; 13:3 and note. (CSB)

It shall be obvious to all who share in the event that God has once again had a hand in the course that things took, that the hand of the Lord has been at work, in behalf of His servants. But for His enemies indignation lies in store. (Leupold)

The prophet's prayer of chapters 63 and 64 voiced dismay over the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple. God answers dismay, concern, and anguish with the promise of the New Jerusalem. It will rise from the remnant of the old. God will fill it with peace and wealth. God's people trust that God will make it wonderful. God himself will nourish the faithful with the gospel and comfort them with his presence and care. All this is an appropriate response to the prayer of God's OT faithful. As we note these comforting and reassuring promises, God reminds us of the sober reality that will confront all who have followed their own imaginations and become his enemies. As we have had so often, side by side we have rich, beautiful gospel and stern terrifying law. (PBC)

**66:7–14** The Lord will bring about a new birth of joy and delight. We should not look elsewhere for lasting satisfaction and comfort. Motherly comfort and peace like a river will satisfy and delight all God's people. Just as a child's mother meets his or her needs, so our heavenly Father meets our needs of provision and pardon. • Gracious Lord, by Your Son, Jesus Christ, You delivered us from destruction. In Holy Baptism, You caused us to be born again. Carry us and bless us with the comfort and peace that only You can give. Amen. (TLSB)

**66:15–16** *fire*. A figure of judgment (see 1:31 and note; 30:27). (CSB)

*in fire*. The use of fire is an execution of judgment (1:31; 30:27; 33:11–14; 34:9–10; Mt 3:12; 2Pt 3:10; Rv 20:10, 14–15). Its purpose was the complete destruction of evil. Burning accompanied the capture and destruction of enemy cities (cf Jsh 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Jgs 1:8). The Lord’s theophanies by fire include the bush (Ex 3:2), the pillar at night (Ex 13:21–22), and Mount Sinai (Ex 19:18). In Dt 4:24 and 9:3, the Lord Himself is described as a devouring fire. Fire is used as a metaphor for the Lord’s anger (Lm 2:4; Ezk 36:5; Na 1:6). Cf Ezk 10:1–2. (TLSB)

**66:15** *the LORD will come*. Judgment Day. (TLSB)

*chariots ... like a whirlwind*. See 5:28; 2Ki 2:11; 6:17; Ps 68:17. (CSB)

The prophet pictures God as a chariot with fire and storm, based on the story of Ex. 14, where Pharaoh is the *chariots like a storm wind*, coming with a chariot. (Luther)

*anger*. See 34:2; 42:25 and notes. (CSB)

*rebuke*. See 51:20 and note. (CSB)

**66:16** *sword*. See 27:1; 34:6 and note. (CSB)

You know what fire and sword mean in Scripture. But here we cite particularly the fire and sword of the Romans, who would destroy them. (Luther)

*execute judgment*. The day of the Lord (see note on 2:11, 17, 20; cf. Eze 38:21–22). (CSB)

**66:17** *consecrate and purify themselves*. By special rituals required by their pagan religion. Cf. 2Ch 30:17. (CSB)

*gardens*. See 1:29 and note. (CSB)

*one in the midst*. Either the person leading the initiation rites or the goddess to whom they devote themselves. (TLSB)

*flesh of pigs*. See 65:4 and note. (CSB)

Mice are associated with the Philistine god Dagon. (TLSB)

All who please themselves are rat eaters in an allegorical sense. (Luther)

**66:18–21** A new prose subunit (66:18–21) begins here with Yahweh’s emphatic “and as for me” (וְאַنְתָּךְ). However, 66:18–21 is at the same time connected to 66:15–17 as “Yahweh” appears four times in each subunit. He alone directs the destinies of nations and kingdoms. Reading 66:15–24 sequentially, the universal judgment of 66:15–17 is followed by a massive missionary

movement. Yahweh's advent in 66:15 accents wrath, while his coming in 66:18–21 is to save. (CC)

**66:18** *their imaginations.*† See 65:2 and note. (CSB)

The works and thoughts (66:18) refer to the idolaters (syncretists) described in the prior verse, who are defined by their unclean foods ("swine and the detestable thing and the mouse," 66:17). They will not bask in Yahweh's glory as this revelation is reserved for those whom he will "gather" (66:18). The theme of "gathering" (גָּאַת) is central to chapters 60–62 (the core chapters of 56–66): the new Zion is the place for the revelation of Yahweh's glory, acting like a magnet for the nations (60:1; 62:1; cf. 2:2–4; 25:6–8). His universal Gospel invitation is extended to foreigners in 56:1–8 (which presents the agenda of chapters 56–66), especially his pledge to "gather" yet more: "the Lord Yahweh, the one gathering Israel's dispersed ones," promises, "I will still gather [others] to it, besides its ones already gathered" (56:8). (CC)

*gather all nations.* Cf. Joel 3:2; Zep 3:8; Zec 14:2. (CSB)

*see my glory.* Usually linked with God's deliverance of his people (see 35:2–4; 40:5 and notes). (CSB)

"They will see my glory" (66:18). The first time people "see" "the glory of Yahweh" is in Ex 16:7, where Israel witnesses Yahweh's provision of manna. From the vantage point of the seraphim in the temple, the whole earth is full of Yahweh's glory (Is 6:3), but a day is coming when what is visible only for a select few will be made obvious to all (Is 40:5; Ps 97:6; cf. Num 14:21). Jesus is the full embodiment of God's glory (Heb 1:3), and at the end of the age, he will gather all the nations to stand before his throne of glory (Mt 25:31; Rev 20:11–12). For now, the "mystery" is that "Christ in you" is "the *hope of glory*" (Col 1:27), but "when Christ is revealed—he who is your life—then you also with him will be revealed in glory" (Col 3:4). (CC)

The people referred to here are those who did not repent and follow the Lord. They are mentioned in 65:1–5; and 66:3–4,17.

The judgment upon Jerusalem by the Romans anticipated the final judgment God would visit upon all the world. Jesus said that when He returns "All the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30). The words of Isaiah's prophecy speak of the judgment God will bring upon all people. He will come with fire and sword. God's two judgments blend together. The destruction of Jerusalem would signal the end of the OT era and would come upon the Jewish nation who had rejected the Lord's Messiah. The final judgment on the Last Day will descend upon "all men" and "all nations and tongues." (PBC)

At destruction of Jerusalem, the Lord would allow some from the Jewish nation to survive. Not all Jews would be destroyed. God directs us to see what He would do with the believers that survive the judgment of Jerusalem. God would send some of the believers to be His missionaries. They would go to Tarshish, perhaps Spain, to the

Libyans and Lydians, people in northern Africa; to Tubal, the region we know as Asia Minor; to Greece; and to the distant islands, the Mediterranean world. Those whom God would send out would “proclaim (His) glory among the nations.” As we read the book of Acts in the NT, we can see the fulfillment of this prophecy. (PBC)

“Then the godly will recognize My glory and their abominations.” In the last place, as he is about to bring his prophecy to a close, the prophet puts two passages about judgment, the abandonment and eternal rejection of the Jews and the reception of the Gentiles. This is the end, as if to say, “Because you are so wicked and will have it no other way and cannot be persuaded by any means, let your destruction take its course.” (Luther)

**66:19** *sign.* Possibly the banner of 11:10, 12 (see note on 5:26; cf. Ps 74:4). Cf. the “sign of the Son of Man” (Mt 24:30) at the second coming. (CSB)

A dramatic sign will draw the people, their kings, and their gifts to process to Jerusalem and enter the city (cf. 11:11–12; 43:5–7; 49:22–23). The “sign” (**תְּוִזֵּבָע**) in 66:19 is similar to the one in 55:13; both are connected with Yahweh’s action of regathering people. Beyond that, the sign is not explained. (In 7:14 the “sign” is clarified as the virgin who conceives a son and names him Immanuel.) In the NT, the portent that sends people out to gather the nations is the virgin-born Son, his cross, and his empty tomb (Acts 2:22–36). It is Christ, “a man attested by God to you with mighty deeds and miracles and *signs* that God did through him in your midst” (Acts 2:22). On the Last Day the “sign” of the Son of Man will be beheld by all as he comes on the clouds of heaven, and all will mourn (Mt 24:30). But he will beckon the chosen to the new Jerusalem, his holy mountain (Rev 21:1–2, 10). (CC)

Looking back at 7:14 the sign might well mean the Gentiles. God’s work will be done even if those originally designated don’t follow through.

*those who survive.*† The judgment of v. 16. Cf. Zec 14:16. (CSB)

The banner of the Servant (11:10–12) and the sign of the Son of Man (Mt 24:30) will call all to the holy mountain (cf Is 2:1–5). (TLSB)

Nations will bring the scattered elect to Jerusalem. The emphasis is placed on the gathering’s evangelical purpose, to “declare my glory” (Is 66:19). The notion of being witnesses (e.g., 43:9–12; 55:4–5) thus receives a sharper focus. Those who turn to Yahweh and are saved are constituted to be his ambassadors. (CC)

The missional strategy in the OT is normally one of centripetal attraction (e.g., Deut 4:5–8; Is 2:2–4). Yet here Yahweh’s tactic is a centrifugal sending, just as he sent Isaiah out of his temple to preach to Israel (Is 6:8–13) and Jonah to preach against Nineveh (Jonah 1:1–2; 3:1–2). This certainly is a statement “of mission as we today employ the term—the sending of individuals to distant peoples in order to proclaim God’s glory among them.” (CC)

Isaiah's list of the peoples and places to which the missionaries are sent is evocative, suggesting a worldwide outreach, much like the list in Is 11:11 and Acts 2:5–11. Together these lists point to “all the families of the earth” (Gen 12:3). While “those drawing the bow” or “archers” may simply designate Meshech the inclusion of these weapons of war might indicate that the Gospel will be met with opposition, which can turn violent (a frequent motif in the book of Acts). (CC)

The role of these missionaries is to declare Yahweh’s glory. Just like the servant nation (42:6) and the Suffering Servant, they are a light for the world (49:6). Their goal is to bring the Servant’s free gift of righteousness to many more people (53:11; 54:17). (CC)

*Tarshish.* See 23:6 and note. (CSB)

*Libyans.* People who lived west of Egypt. See Na 3:9. (CSB)

*Lydians.* People from either west-central Asia Minor (see Ge 10:13 and note) or Africa. (CSB)

A range of places and ethnic groups around the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world among whom God’s report and His glory were not known. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

*archers.* See Jer 46:9. (CSB)

In Hebrew this would thought of to refer to still other nations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

*Tubal.* Usually mentioned with Meshech (see Ge 10:2 and note; Eze 27:13; 38:2–3; 39:1). It was probably a region southeast of the Black Sea. (CSB)

*islands.* See 11:11 and note. (CSB)

*proclaim my glory.* See 42:12; 1Ch 16:24. (CSB)

His victory. (TLSB)

Hbr *kebod yahweh*. The term *kebod* refers to the “weight” or “weightiness” of something, and thereby its impressive appearance or “honor.” Moses introduces the expression during the exodus (Ex 16:7) to contrast the Lord’s majesty with that of Pharaoh and Egypt. It comes to describe the visible manifestation of God’s presence in the cloud and fire of the exodus. It is the splendor of God’s presence that belongs *now* to believers in the promise, and that by His advanced preparation *will be* revealed to them and in them. (TLSB pp. 6–7)

NATIONS – Those mentioned to symbolize the worldwide gathering of the redeemed were on the outer perimeter of ancient Israel: Tarshish to the west (see note, 1Ki 10:22); Pul and Lud in Africa (LXX “Put,” cf Ezk 38:5); Tubal and Javan to the north (Ezk 27:13). *Javan.* Translated “Greece” in Zec 9:13. (TLSB)

**66:20** They will come to Zion by all means possible. (TLSB)

*bring all your brothers.*† See 11:11–12; 49:22; 60:4 and notes. (CSB)

These are other Gentiles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

Who are “your brothers”? Are they Gentile converts or believing Israelites from the Diaspora? One thing is certain: “your brothers” does not have the same meaning that it has in 66:5, where they are apostate Israelites ostracizing Yahweh’s faithful remnant. Since chapters 65–66 testify to the birth of a new community (e.g., 65:8–9; 66:7–8) that includes believing Gentiles (56:1–8), “your brothers” is a mixed group of the elect from among all people. How are they “an offering to Yahweh” (66:20)? These believers are gifts, that is, “the firstfruits” of those who are in Christ (e.g., 2 Thess 2:13; James 1:18; Rev 14:4). Paul embraces this metaphor when he speaks of his converts as “the offering of the Gentiles,” “acceptable” and “sanctified by the Holy Spirit,” an “offering” that is a validation of his ministry (Rom 15:16). (CC)

*holy mountain.* See 2:2–4 and note. (CSB)

The former distinctions between clean and unclean will pass away. In Christ, all of the barriers between Israelites and Gentiles are forever banished (cf. Gal 3:28–29; Eph 2:11–22). The kingdom that Yahweh establishes on his “holy mountain” (Is 66:20; cf. Is 65:25; Rev 21:10) is a realm where everyone is “holy” (Is 62:12; Zech 14:20–21; Rev 20:6). (CC)

*as an offering ... to the temple.* As the Israelites were to bring their tithes and offerings (see Dt 12:5–7). (CSB)

ON HORSES – Horses were ceremonially clean animals. This says that the Gentiles will come with offerings that are ceremonially pure and sanctified in every way. This is a stark contrast what the Israelites bring in verse 17. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

**66:21** *some of them.*† No longer will only Levites be eligible to become priests as in the old covenant; all of spiritual Israel will be a “holy priesthood” (1Pe 2:5, 9). (CSB)

The Levites would not automatically be chosen as the priests because they failed to provide proper spiritual leadership. This opens the door for the Gentiles to serve the Lord in thus capacity.

The old system, in which the priesthood was limited to the sons of Aaron (Num 18:7; cf. Ezek 44:6–13), has become obsolete. Every man in the new community will have the opportunity to enjoy access to the highest ranks of clerical leadership. Timothy is an example of a man who, though of mixed Jewish-Gentile ancestry (Acts 16:1), became a pastor in the Christian church (2 Tim 1:6). And while the pastoral office in the church is limited to qualified men (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), already now, baptized men and women alike are God’s “sons” and Abraham’s

“heirs” (Gal 3:26–29) and hold holy office in the “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9; see also Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Gentiles are not excluded from anything. (CC)

However, throughout Israel’s history, more often than not the people failed in their calling to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6). The holy God then took up residence in human flesh, in the person of Jesus, to be his holy temple forever (Jn 2:19–22; cf. “tabernacled,” Jn 1:14). He is “*the* Holy One” (e.g., Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; Jn 6:69). Through his suffering, death, and resurrection (“in three days I will raise [this temple],” Jn 2:19), Christ has formed for himself a new “holy priesthood” and “holy nation” (1 Pet 2:5, 9). When Jesus returns he will bring down the holy city, Jerusalem (Rev 21:2). (CC)

Yahweh seeks people from every tribe and nation to be a part of this everlasting holy priesthood. They will arrive by means of every form of transportation: horses, chariots, wagons, mules, and camels. (CC)

**66:22** *new heavens ... new earth.* See 65:17 and note. (CSB)

As lasting as the new creation is the crown of His creation, His restored people. For the servants of the Lord, life goes on eternally in the presence of the Lord (Rv 21:2–4) with a share in His glory (Is 4:2; 11:10; 43:7; 58:8; 60:1–2, 13; 62:2). Cf v 24 for the final place of those who rebel. (TLSB)

The preaching of the Gospel a new Jerusalem is formed (Christian church). All the people of the earth are not a part of that chosen group including us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

Nations will be gathered to see Yahweh’s glory (66:18) and then be sent to the unbelieving nations to announce what they have seen (66:19). These missionaries are also the subject in 66:20–21 and will therefore bring the elect (“all your brothers,” 66:20) to the new Jerusalem. Some converted Gentiles will even become priests (66:21). (CC)

*name and descendants endure.* See 48:19 and note. (CSB)

**66:23** *New Moon.* See 1:14 and note. (CSB)

All time will be holy. (TLSB)

Just as the first creation reached its zenith with Yahweh’s gift of the Sabbath (Gen 2:2–3), so will the new creation. Poetic language is being used here, and so we must avoid an overly literalistic interpretation. Eternal existence on Zion will not just consist of weekly and monthly worship gatherings, but will also find glorious and joy-filled expression within the flow of a continual life of receiving from God’s grace and then giving back to God in worship and to one another. We will perfectly preserve justice and do righteousness (Is 56:1). It will be a perpetual living in “Yahweh’s year of favor” (61:2), where all of “Zion will be redeemed with justice and her repentant ones with righteousness” (1:27). Zech 14:16–21 also envisions the restored order as one where worship is a defining characteristic. (CC)

The believers gathered from Gentile nations (Is 66:18–19) become “your brothers” (66:20). Just so, “your offspring” and “your name” (66:22) now morph into “all flesh” (66:23), which denotes the full number of the elect who will inhabit the new heavens and the new earth (65:17–25; 66:22). Life will continue eternally in the presence of the triune God (Rev 21:2–4) as we share in his glory. (CC)

The godly have a continuous Sabbath. This will not end until the end of time comes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part3)

*all mankind ... bow down.* See 19:21; Zec 14:16 and notes. (CSB)

**66:24** Quoted in part in Mk 9:48. (CSB)

Gruesome evidence of God’s victory. (TLSB)

*go out and look.* The Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew *ge’ hinnom*, from which the word “Gehenna” comes) was located southwest of Jerusalem and became a picture of hell. See Ne 11:30; Jer 7:32. (CSB)

*dead bodies.* See 5:25; 34:3. (CSB)

*rebelled.* See 1:2 and note; 24:20. (CSB)

*worm will not die.* There will be everlasting torment. See 14:11; 48:22; 50:11; 57:21. (CSB)

Jesus used these terms to describe the torment of hell (Mk 9:43–48). (TLSB)

*fire ... quenched.* See 1:31 and note; Mt 3:12. (CSB)

*loathsome.* The Hebrew for this word is translated “contempt” in Da 12:2. (CSB)

Rendered “contempt” in Dn 12:2. (TLSB)

They have been consigned to eternal fire. This text, known well enough from Mark 9:48, states that the ungodly Jews are condemned forever. They have their existence here as dead bodies. So we see an unquenchable fire and an undying worm. The bite of the conscience is in truth that worm. Sin is the worm that bites day and night. Afterwards comes the fire. *And they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.* (Luther)

**66:15–24** With hot rebuke, Isaiah closes his prophecy. Though he has emphasized God’s grace and restoration in the preceding chapters, he ends with the fires of punishment because his hearers will not repent. This day, with repentant cry, lift your voice to the Maker of heaven and earth. He who has every right to condemn also has every desire to forgive you and raise you to

new life as He demonstrated toward you in His Son, the Savior from sin and hell. • Holy Jesus, sanctify and purify me from all uncleanness. Quench my passion for sin, and grant me life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)