

at the time of the exile, when they seemed cut off from the temple and the sacrifices and it was difficult to carry out the full details of God's law. Yet the assurance given is far broader than merely to meet these exilic conditions. Its message is addressed to "the son of the stranger," to "the eunuch" -- in fact, to all people. Those who seem cut off because of ceremonial uncleanness, or of failure to meet the hereditary conditions that make entrance into the ranks of God's people easy, are assured that God has a wonderful place for them in His kingdom if they will but believe in His Son and accept the covenant which He offers them. They can receive the sure mercies of David if they show the sincerity of their faith by keeping His Sabbaths from pollution and taking hold of His covenant. Their burnt offerings will be received upon His altar.

We know, of course, that all the burnt offerings found their fulfillment in what they signified -- the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. God's house is not going to be limited in any nationalistic way. It is not to be merely for one race or group, but it is called "an house of prayer for all people." Thus this little passage greatly stresses the universality of the Gospel call. It reaches out to all the nations of the earth and invites them to come and accept the water of life that can be obtained without money and without price.

The chapter divisions which Archbishop Langton introduced into the Latin Bible in the 13th century are a great help for quickly locating Bible passages, but we should never forget that they were put in rather hastily and that they often hide the natural divisions of the text instead of making them visible. Thus it is hard for us to imagine any reason why there should be a chapter division after 56:12. The subject matter of the latter part of chapter 56 and that of the early part of chapter 57 are continuous and there is absolutely no division of thought. On the other hand, it is strange that 56:1-8 and 56:9-12 should be part of the same chapter. They are not merely distinct sections, but actually are parts of entirely different divisions of the book. Verse 8 ends the great passage of blessing describing the results of the work of the Servant which runs from chapter 54:1 to 56:8. Verses 9-12 begin a long passage of denunciation of sin. There are few sharper breaks in any book of the Bible than that