

between verses 8 and 9 of chapter 56. If there is any place in the Bible where a chapter division is required by the context it is surely at this point.

A New Section of the Book: Isaiah 56:9 ff.

At verse 9 we begin an entirely new division which carries us to the end of the book of Isaiah. From the beginning of chapter 40 to this point there has been a rather continuous stress on the problems of Israel in the exile, and God's answer has been traced to its culmination in the work of the suffering Messiah with its wonderful results for the whole world. All through these chapters Israel in general, or Israel in the exile, was in mind, but not particularly the Israelite nation of Isaiah's day. It was, in fact, only the godly among the Israelites of Isaiah's day for whom these chapters had any particular appropriateness. However, at verse 9 the prophet turns his attention back to the nation of his day and deals with its immediate problems in a manner quite similar to that in which he discussed them in many earlier portions of the book.

Here Isaiah begins a three-fold passage of denunciation of the people's sin and declaration of the punishment that is sure to come as its result. Each of the first two denunciations is followed by a declaration of God's mercy upon those who are true to Him, while the third leads into another great passage of blessing, further describing the results of the Servant's work, and including most of the remaining chapters of the Book of Isaiah. This material can be briefly outlined as follows:

- A. (1) Rebuke upon the watchmen and leaders of the people, 56:9-57:13a
- (2) Declaration of God's mercy upon those who trust Him, 57:13b-19
- (3) Brief epilogue contrasting the restless situation of the wicked, 57:20-21
- B. (1) Rebuke upon formalism and insincere worship, 58:1-5
- (2) God's blessing upon those who seek Him in sincerity and truth, 58:6-14