

Fact Sheet for **“Ceremony or Heart?”**
Isaiah 66:1-2

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06/27/2015

This was a time of confusion, uncertainty, and risk for Jerusalem and Judah. The northern 10 tribes of Israel had been conquered and deported. What did this mean for the descendants of Abraham Isaac, and Jacob? What of the promise made to them? In Jerusalem and Judah there were some who followed the Lord, but many did not. The worship of other gods was rampant. The moral fiber of their society was disintegrating. The temple built by Solomon stood in the center of the city. Ceremony and ritual still took place there, but it seemed that something was very wrong. It was to the Jewish people at this time that Isaiah wrote the following words...

^{ESV 1} ¶ **Thus says the LORD:**
"Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?
^{2a} **All these things my hand has made,**
and so all these things came to be
declares the LORD.

These words bring to mind the Davidic Covenant. David intended to build a temple for the Lord (2 Samuel 7:5-7).

God would add that his son (Solomon) would build the temple instead, and that David's throne (house) would be established forever.

Solomon would echo this in his prayer of dedication for the temple (1 Kings 8:27).

And another thing... that temple stood when Isaiah wrote this and remained standing for over 100 years. What did God mean when he said, "what is the house that you would build for me?"

Read again to the words of Isaiah 66:1-2a. Now read 66:2b.

^{2b} **But this is the one to whom I will look:**
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word.

How does 2b fit with 1-2a?

The NLT puts it very well.

^{NLT} **Isaiah 66:1-2** ¶ This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that? Could you build me such a resting place? ² My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in

them are mine. I, the LORD, have spoken! "I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word.

Many of the Jewish people, including their spiritual leaders, were looking to the temple, ceremony, and ritual for their spiritual meat, instead of having a humble and contrite heart, instead of trembling at God's Word.

A century later Jeremiah would address the same problem when the temple was about to be destroyed (Jeremiah 7:4). The temple would be destroyed due to their sin! The temple was not God's highest priority for them! Even in the NT we see this same attitude (John 4:20-21).

God is most interested in our attitude towards sin and righteousness as put forward in his Word (Psalm 34:18; Matthew 5:3-4; Luke 18:13-14).

Isaiah 66:1-2a is quoted by Stephen in Acts 7. Stephen was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" and was one of the seven men chosen to serve the widows in Acts 6. Very soon he was seized and was brought before the high priest and the Sanhedrin. At the end of that meeting he would become the first martyr of the church. These were some of his last words (Acts 7:44-50). Stephen quoted Isaiah 66:1-2a. Now look at how he applied his words to those Jewish leaders in his day who were steeped in ritual and ceremony but whose heart was far from God. These are his very next words (Acts 7:51-54).

These were Isaiah's next words (Isaiah 66:3-4).

Today we are facing a similar attack on God's Word

*Washington (CNN)*In a landmark opinion, a divided Supreme Court on Friday ruled that same-sex couples can marry nationwide, establishing a new civil right and handing gay rights advocates a historic victory.

"President Obama called the Supreme Court decision requiring states to recognize same-sex marriage "a victory for America."

"President Barack Obama urged supporters of same-sex marriage Friday to "help" people to overcome their religious convictions, so they are no longer held back from a progressive American view of equality."

Tony Compolo – "I am finally ready to call for the full acceptance of Christian gay couples into the Church"

John Piper – <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/so-called-same-sex-marriage>

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he who is humble and contrite in spirit
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