

## Isaiah 55:1-5

### COME AND DRINK – ISAIAH 55:1-5

**Introduction:** Isaiah 55 is a beautiful poem in which God, under the metaphor of eating and drinking, invites the reader to taste and drink deeply from the well of his grace. Verse 1: ‘Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, buy and eat ... that, verse 3, your soul may live’.

Before we think about this beautiful invitation, imagine you are a Jewish exile in Babylon hundreds of years before Christ. Life is hard. You think about home, Jerusalem, and the pleasures of the land flowing with milk and honey.

Now imagine you pick up this scroll of Isaiah and you read the words we have just heard. How do you think you would feel?

You eventually return to Jerusalem with hopes high for a wonderful new life in the Promised Land, but those hopes are not fulfilled; no prosperity, no freedom, and no spiritual refreshment. What would you make of these words then?

This is the great paradox of Old Testament prophecy; they seem to promise so much and deliver so little. The reality is that it is only when you get to the New Testament that the paradox is resolved as we see those promises fulfilled, not in the land of Israel, but in Jesus Christ himself and in eternity.

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First, a glorious invitation:

‘Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.’

Under this image God is inviting the reader to stop looking for satisfaction in *things* and find it in him. Verse 2:

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

What he is talking about is not literal food but something at a far deeper level than that. These words anticipate similar words of Jesus himself; John 7:37:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures say, “out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”’

And then there is John 4:13, Jesus to the woman at the well:

Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give will never thirst again, the water I will give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

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The meaning of this metaphor of water is made clear by Jesus in John 7:39: 'By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who were to believe in him were later to receive.'

So what is being offered here? Is it victory over all your troubles? Is it prosperity and a life without pain? Is it happiness? It can't be any of those things because as Isaiah 55: 2 reminds us, *they* do not satisfy.

We have to be very careful here; the obvious is not always the answer and the easy way is not always the only way. Yet something wonderful *is* being offered to us in these verses and we need to know what it is.

Go back to the beginning. The Jewish exiles would have thought that Isaiah's words looked forward to prosperity in their homeland, but when they got there, it didn't happen and by the end of the Old Testament period the Jews were still waiting.

When Jesus came, as we have seen, the promise of Isaiah 55 is renewed, only this time it *does* come true. It has to do with the special presence of God, through his Spirit in our inner being.

The promise of living water has to do with the forgiveness of our sins through the death of Jesus. It has to do with the inner presence whereby God gives us his peace, his comfort and his strength. It has to do with the assurance in our heart that we are safe in him forever.

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This blessing is far greater than living in Jerusalem and far greater than the material things of this world 'which do not satisfy.' The apostle Paul expressed this reality in Philippians, Chapter 4:11:

I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am in to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Is that true for Paul but not for us? Absolutely not! He faced enormous difficulties in his life, but in them he had access to a well from which he could draw *living* water. That well was the presence of Jesus *in*, but not necessarily *from*, the troubles of this life. Paul points to this in 2 Corinthians 4: 17:

This slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look forward, not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are not seen.

You see, in our dark times we are dealing with the same problem as the returning exiles in Jerusalem. Yet we have so much more to be thankful for than they did, and there is so much more to come.

We have the 'living water,' Jesus himself.

So, when the well seems dry, and the going is hard, listen to Jesus; 'Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest'. Or, in the words of our passage today:

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Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters and he who has no money, come buy and eat! ... Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food.

That rich food is Jesus; and the way we eat is by putting our trust in him. Do that and you will never hunger or be thirsty again.