

# New Wine and Good Seed – Isaiah 65:8-16

**Introduction** – These verses record the continuation of God’s response to the lament/prayer of Chs 63-64. In 65:1-7 He refuted the notion that He was unwilling to come to those who would repent. Now He speaks of how His judgment tarries and how this allows both the good and the evil to inhabit the same covenant space. We will see that Jesus taught the same concept even as the New Covenant was inaugurated. This can encourage the faithful in the church as well as admonish the apathetic, and warn the hypocrite.

**The Remnant of New Wine** (vv8-10) – All of Israel was guilty, but God was going to spare a remnant, which was why the judgment was tarrying; there was new wine found in the cluster *“that I may not destroy them all”* (v8). Isaiah had begun his book with the same notion (Isaiah 1:9). Paul spoke of this believing remnant in Rom 11:5, *“Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”* And so God promises to bring forth this new wine from Jacob (v9) and these servants shall become the ones who will inherit all of the promised land, from Sharon to the Valley of Achor (from west to east) *“for My people who have sought Me”* (v10).

**But Those Who Forsake the Lord** (vv11-12) – To that generation, the Lord would say that while there was a remnant, the cluster as a whole was unfaithful and rebellious. They prepared their ritual meals to pursue the gods Fortune and Destiny (v11) and are therefore “destined” for the sword, “prepared” for the slaughter (v12). Now be careful about pointing fingers at the rebellious Jews. *“Israel’s sin, and that of all humans, is rebellion. When God speaks, we refuse to listen; what God hates, we choose; and what He chooses, we reject. The results of this rebellious attitude would drive the Servant/Messiah to His death”* (Oswalt). The Lord’s tarrying meant tarrying, not forgetting; His wrath would be poured out on unbelieving Israel. And this is a warning for every sinner who has not yet seen the consequences or God’s judgment upon his sin – you have not “gotten away with it” (Matt 12:36, Heb 4:13).

**The Final Stark Contrast** (vv13-16) – These are traditional figures used for blessing and cursing. To be blessed is to have enough to eat and drink, to have reasons to rejoice and exult out of a glad heart. And to be cursed is to suffer want, to be ashamed and in despair with a broken spirit. This stark contrast is guaranteed and eternal but it will begin its manifestation upon this earth, for this is the place where the new wine will reside. The remnant will lose their former name which is cursed and will be called by another name (v15) and they shall take oaths in the name of the God of Amen (truth). In other words, they shall swear allegiance to the One Who is the Truth (Rom 10:9-10).

**Learning from the New Testament** – As always, the NT is our commentary on the OT. Jesus spoke of this new wine, saying that it would have to be put into new wineskins (Mark 2:22). This new wine was the remnant of Jews who received the Holy Spirit and were baptized into the church (Acts 2:38-39). Amos, who was an early contemporary of Isaiah, spoke of the same coming judgment, but used a different metaphor: the sifting of Israel like grain, *“yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground”* (Amos 9:8-9). The new wine and the good seed both represent the remnant saved by God. Jesus taught on what God would do with this good seed sown in the kingdom. And here we find specific instructions for our age.

**The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares** (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43) – Jesus is describing the situation of the church in the world. Jesus is the sower of the good seed (v37). The field is the world (v38) and the kingdom (v41). The good seed are the children of the kingdom, and the counterfeit tares are the children of the wicked one (v38). The enemy is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels (v39). There is a final great harvest and the tares are finally rooted out and cast into a furnace of fire (v42) and then the righteous will shine out like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (v43). If you have ears to hear, you should listen up (v43).

**The Church in the World** – What we have is a description of the boundaries of Christ’s kingdom which includes the kingdoms of the world (Rev 11:15). The world is His field, and the devil is the intruder. Although there is application to the unbelievers of the first century, I believe Jesus is speaking of the nature of the new creation and the entire gospel age.

**Expect Different Kinds of Seed** – The principle is that we are to spare the tares for the sake of the wheat. This means that while there are times that we must exercise church discipline (Matt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5:4-5), there are to be regular times when a clear situation of a false profession does not call for such discipline – for the sake of the wheat.

**Avoiding Ditches** – This does not mean that we should pretend that tares are wheat, that those who are not living like Christians are actually regenerate. But we must avoid a kind of Pharisaical righteousness that requires we regularly purge the church of all spiritual flakes. We are to be a people who let love cover a multitude of sins. Jesus tells us to forgive – a lot (Matt 18:21-22) and this means that many times we forgive even though we doubt that heart issues have really been addressed.

**Tarrying with the Lord** – Remember that the devil is the accuser and what we see here is his attempts to make us imitate him. The best response to many evils is therefore to do nothing. Leave them be. Let it ride. In one sense, if they are firmly planted in the kingdom, and are plainly going to Hell – Jesus says let them. But remember, in another sense it is another opportunity to chase them with the gospel of free grace. For God regularly turns tares into wheat. That’s regeneration. And that’s the work of the New Creation.