

Isaiah 57:1-21

"No Peace For The Wicked"

*Ch 56 closes w/an infestation of degradation & deprivation among the leaders of ancient Israel. Priestly, politically, corruption was running rampant in seemingly every stratum of authority. (Sounds strangely familiar doesn't it)? Listen, God will not hold guiltless the nation that abandons Him.

As the curtain *closes* on Ch 56, God is laying out His case that ensures the coming judgment. He essentially tells them that the ruling party is blind (to eminent danger), useless (like a watchdog that can't bark), lazy, greedy, self-serving & self-indulging. They may be leaders *of* the people, but they're not leaders *for* the people. In fact, they only enrich themselves *off* the people. & W/this kind of continual unrelenting corruption, judgement cannot fail to come.

Question, what is the purpose of government if not to promote, preserve & protect the good of the people? **But when the government subsidizes the sexualizing of children through the books they allow in the libraries of the public schools & gives grants & reimbursements (your tax dollars) to abortion clinics to fund the murder of the unborn, support & subsidize the irreversible mutilation known as gender reassignment or chemical castration, (just to mention a few of unconscionable things our government supports), something is radically wrong!** – & Though technology & culture changes, it's glaringly apparent that the human heart does not.* Isaiah is writing into a culture which is in many ways of the same mindset that we are today.

– & As the curtain *opens* on Ch 57, the set hasn't really changed. It's like the second scene of the same act. Let's turn our attention to Vs 1.

Vs 1-2

*Now, this is interesting. When Isaiah is writing this, the righteous are being persecuted in the nation (probably under the reign of Manasseh, the single most wicked king that Israel ever knew). They're perishing & no one thinks a thing about it. On the contrary the mindset is probably more along the lines of, "If these 'believers', 'God fearers' 'killjoys' were just gone, things would be much better off"!

But God says, "Here's what you don't realize. It's not that you're getting *rid* of them. It's that I'm *removing them...*" He's uprooting this mentality or the stereotypical understanding that sees death as a punishment for wickedness or judgment for sin in a person's life. Someone dies as a young believer & people think, "I wonder if God was some secret sin in their life & God was judging them?"

But what God is saying here is that there are times, when a culture can grow so corrupt that death isn't the *repercussion* of sin, it's a *reward* for the *righteous*. God just removes the righteous from the wicked because judgment is on the way!

But the leaders of Jerusalem weren't taking the warning. God was delivering the faithful from the calamity that was to come! So, there are times that what seems like a premature death has nothing to do w/sin *in* a person, but the sins of the people who *surround* that person. God just ushers them into peace rather than causing them to endure the unrelenting wickedness that will result in His judgment. –

When a people reject God, reject His word, His ways... & prefer to be led by the world rather than His word, there comes a time when God will give them exactly what they want along w/the consequences that accommodate it. *

So, God removes the righteous, then pours out His wrath. Why does this sound familiar? – Because this is the exact model that God has laid out for His church in the last days concerning the rapture. **God will remove the righteous, then pour out His wrath upon the wicked. As the world grows more & more corrupt, rejecting the ways of God & the word of God, the time will come when God takes the righteous away from the evil, the righteous shall enter into peace & the wicked into judgment.**

In commending the believers in Thessalonica Paul said, **"...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."**¹ He continues in Ch 5, **"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,"**²

But notice, Vs 2, "He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds." This is how the bible pictures the death of the righteous. Now you know why people say, "Rest in peace". Because the bible says that when the righteous die, they enter into peace. No more conflict with world, with the flesh, spiritual warfare comes to an end... pure & absolute peace. Inwardly, outwardly, circumstantially, eternally.

Vs 3-10

I trust you can see there's quite a lot in this section of scripture. We'll keep our thoughts centered on a few primary points. 1st of all we note the radical contrast between Vs 2 & 3. From the peace & the rest of the righteous, God launches into scathing accusation calling those who rebelled *against* Him, refused their relationship w/Him, "sons of the sorceress" & the "offspring of the adulterer & harlot!" Wow!

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Th 1:9-10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Th 5:9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He says they're (Vs 4) "children of transgression" & "offspring of falsehood". God heard the mockery of the wicked against the righteous & He says, "Come here! Who do you think you are? Aren't you the offspring of falsehood, of the adulterer & harlot, sons of the sorceress?"

& He's not speaking physically (though it perhaps it was true of some of them). He's speaking spiritually. The nation of Israel had "cheated" on God. He regarded Himself as married to them, in a covenant relationship w/them. Yet they abandoned Him, entered in to the worship of false gods & demonic entities. They were unfaithful to God & God calls them out on it!

But it's a common sin of human nature, we can see all the problems, all the sins in the life of others, but we're strangely blind to our own... God is about the business here of shouting from the rooftops the things they've whispered in secret & bringing into the light what they've done in the darkness.

* In Vs 5 He touches on a topic that plagued their day & it plagues our day as well. He speaks of "inflaming" themselves w/gods under every green tree. This word, "Inflaming" speaks of burning w/lust. The ancient gods worshiped by the Canaanites (which were introduced to the Israelites) were really an ancient form of pornography. These idols (Ashtoreth, Molech, Ba'al etc) were fashioned w/exaggerated sexual features (pornographic in nature). & They would be used to arouse & inflame a person's sexual passions. & The worship of many of them would be consummated in some debased sexual ritual.

This wasn't something they were doing privately (as though that wouldn't be bad enough) they were shameless & doing these things publicly (under ever green tree). The "always green" we call them "evergreen" trees were a picture to the Canaanite of fertility, always green (always fertile).

Now, in the U.S. alone, there is (on the average) of \$3,100 per second being spent on pornography. There is a heightened sense of sexual arousal in our culture. & When you live in a culture that promotes immorality. That will inevitably bring about the consequence of unwanted pregnancies... What do you do when you want to have endless sexual encounters but bear no responsibilities for the pregnancies that will inevitably occur? In ancient Israel they would (Vs 5) "slay the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?"

They would sacrifice their children to Molech, tossing their infants into bonfires or laying them on the incandescent outstretched arms of Molech as the drums played drowning out the sounds of the cries of the babies being burned alive...

It was the ancient version of planned parenthood. Today, we tend to destroy the infants in the womb, so we don't have to hear their screams, but it yields the same result. (& Listen, if you've had an abortion, you need to know that God loves you. That if you haven't already given your life to Christ, forgiveness & new life awaits you by grace through faith in Him. But we need be honest about these things.) People think we'd never revert to something so barbaric as ancient human sacrifice, but we destroy over 900,000 infants a year in the U.S. alone. Seems pretty barbaric to me... *

Molech was one of the "lovers" that God's people had forsaken him for in their spiritual adultery. & It's interesting. People who wouldn't make even a small sacrifice for the LORD would kill their own children for a pagan idol! They would even pour out a drink offering & a grain offering to the smooth stones of the stream... Some people are all about, "God is in the tree, in the rocks, in everything..." They'd sacrifice to any & everything except the Lord! – At the end of Vs 6 God essentially says, "How am I supposed to feel about that? Should I take comfort in these things?" The drink offering, the grain offering were offerings that should've been given to the LORD, but they gave them to idols instead...

But again, * people try to weave this line, straddle this fence today. People don't want to give to the Lord, don't want to make an offering to the Lord (the One who has loved them & given Himself for them, who has saved them, given eternal life *to* them). They won't give of their *time*, won't give of their *talent*, won't give of their *treasure*. But they have all these other little "idols" that they sacrifice everything for! Your idol may be your career. & Man, you'll sacrifice *everything* for your career. You'll work 60+ hrs a week. Move anywhere in the country, miss time w/your family. But you won't serve at your church... no time for that. You won't give *any* time to the Lord...

Or your idol is your popularity, you'll do anything to create another viral video. But you won't put your creative talents to work for the Lord. Or maybe your idol is your addiction. You've sacrificed everything for it. Your job, your family, your health... you'll run yourself into the ground. You'll go to jail, give up your freedom for it! What will you give up for the Lord? Not much...

This might sting a little, but I'm just going to be boldly honest with you. You can always tell a person's "G(g)od" by their willingness to make sacrifices.

People will always sacrifice for their G(g)od. Whoever/whatever their real G(g)od is. It doesn't matter how often they come to church. It becomes apparent what we really worship when we evaluate what we're willing to sacrifice for. *

Vs 7

They would worship on these "high places" because they felt like it brought them closer to their gods. This is what the psalmist was referring to when he wrote, *"I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth."*³ It's comparison & contrast. "I look up to those high places, that's where the pagan thinks their help comes from. But that's *not* where I get my help. My help comes from the Lord... Maker of heaven & earth..."

Vs 8

* He speaks of the doors & doorposts because God had told Israel (Deut 6:4-9) that they were to write *His* word, *His* name on their doors, & their doorposts. They were to be reminders & teaching elements to instruct their children. But they were remembering their pagan gods, pagan practices behind their doors. What are your children learning at home? What do they see "behind closed doors"? God desires that we would teach our children about Him, that they would learn of Him, rather than the ungodly ways & practices of the world... What are the conversations that are taking place behind the closed doors of your home? * Look at Vs 10

Vs10

*"You were wearied in the length of your way." Translation. "The thrill wore off & you were left still unsatisfied." This is the life of the flesh, it's never satisfied. Maybe gratified for the moment, but never satisfied. **You're eventually left empty, wanting more. You gave everything for your career but eventually the glow wore off. Popularity was great for a while but now... it's just not doing it for you... But to make matters more tragic, even after they realized those things weren't going to fill the void they didn't say, "There is no hope", they didn't repent.**

Instead, they doubled down. Grabbed hold of false hope & rather than grieving they kept grinding thinking fulfillment was just another conquest away. The next promotion, a little more money, a little more fame, chasing that next high... You keep "psyching" yourself up, assuring yourself, it's going to work out eventually, you just got keep going.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ps 121:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But God is trying to warn them. To trust in the things of this world, what this world has to offer... it's never going to "work out" for you. Turn to *Him*, trust in *Him*. *

Vs 11-13

I want you guys to see/get this. God confronts the fact that His people don't fear Him, have no real heart to honor Him & that their superficial relationship w/Him was connected to a low view of Him & a lack of respect for Him. *But they have revered (feared), respected something/someone else, that's why their lives are being led the way they are.* He says, "Of who have you been afraid, or feared, that you have lied & not remembered Me, nor taken it to your heart?" *They were lying to themselves about things being ok between them & God... things weren't ok.*

But God puts His finger on the problem; it's their *perspective*. He says that it's because He's held His peace & has been patient w/them that they don't fear Him. * It's crazy how corrupt our flesh can be... We begin to entertain 1 of 3 thoughts when we want to entertain sin & continue to carry a front that we're good with God. #1 We think perhaps God doesn't notice, doesn't see it so we're essentially getting away with it. #2 *We think that perhaps God doesn't care about it. Or #3 (this is the worst) We think that God actually approves of it. Afterall, your situation is unique, you've spoken w/God about it & He's made an exception in your case. People can find themselves in an adulterous relationship & actually deceive themselves into thinking that God has brought them together! That God approves of what they're doing! They've lost a healthy/purifying fear of God!*

But this is such a danger for people. We misinterpret the *mercy* of God, the *silence* of God, the *patience* of God for the *approval* of God. We think, "Well, God didn't strike me dead. My life is going well, circumstances are great so... I guess God is good w/it!" In reality, the *patience* of *God* should lead to repentance in *us*!

Paul expounded on this principle in Romans Ch 2. He said, "*...do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance (tolerance), and longsuffering (patience), not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who 'will render to each one according to his deeds.'*"⁴ God is not a respecter of persons, there are no "exceptions" to the principles & straight forward instructions of His word... *

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 2:4-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In Vs 12 He tells them, “I’ll show you just how ‘good’ you are. I’ll reveal what’s really going on & it’s not going to help you in anyway. & When you start to cry out, let your idols deliver you. Those things you put all your priority upon, made all that sacrifice for... they won’t do anything for you, they’ll just collapse alongside you.”

Storms don’t make a person; they reveal what a person is made of & where their faith lies. To trust in the things of this world leads to ruin. To trust in the Lord (Vs 13) is blessed assurance & security.

Vs 14

After ensuring the condemnation of the wicked, God assures restoration for the repentant. “Heap it up!” The idea is filling in potholes or raising the road over obstacles to ensure the return of God’s people to Himself w/out barriers to impede their way.

“Prepared the way, take the stumbling block out of the way of My people.” Here’s the take home from this Vs. Whatever is an obstacle in the way of your full return to the Lord... it’s got to go. Anything *in the way* of you getting right w/God has to be taken *out of the way*.

Vs 15-21

The undercurrent of this section is the fact that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. I love Vs 15. It kind of calls back to our mind the 1st 5 Vs of the 6th Ch (I’ll let you look that up on your own time).

*God is High, He is exalted, He is Holy... His glory is unending & overwhelming. Yet note who He joins forces with. – The humble, the broken & contrite... If that doesn’t somehow & in some way bring comfort to your heart, I don’t know what will.

I think we err when we feel “familiar” w/God. As if He’s our “Big Buddy” in the sky. God is on another level. Far above us, far greater than us, He is holy, exalted, glorified, worthy of all honor & praise... People don’t run up & “high 5” God. They fall on their faces in His presence.

Here He speaks of not remaining angry or contending w/man forever. But it’s important to see that the context spills out of the spirit of the humble, contrite, repentant one... God knows when we’re *rebelling*... He knows when we’re *repentant*. (Close)

When we repent, He restores, puts praise on our lips... Peace, peace to him who is far off & to him who is near. It doesn’t matter where you may be, how far from God you may feel. God offers peace to you through the blood of J.C. – Apart from Christ we’re at war w/God. In Christ we have peace *with* God & can experience the peace *of* God that passes all understanding & guards our hearts/minds through Christ Jesus.

That's not something the wicked can/will ever experience. They don't get the calming that comes from peace w/God. They're hearts/minds are like the troubled waters of the sea. Always foaming & churning up filth, pollution & debris. They're unsettled. "There is no peace" Says my God, "for the wicked".

Just look around, the wars, the violence, the chaos, the confusion, the crime. The wicked know no peace. Neither here, nor throughout eternity. Because there is no peace, no true peace outside of J.C. So, if you need that peace, come to J.C. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord & He will lift you up. *

Prayer Points:

Father, we're so grateful for the plain, powerful truth of Your word. May we be those who honor You, who fear You, who are ready & eager to repent before You... Humble & contrite. We thank You that You are with us & You dwell *in* us by the power of Your Spirit.

If that's the cry of your heart. You've not surrendered to God, You've not made peace w/God through J.C. by humbling yourself, turning from your sin & trusting in Him for forgiveness & new life. Take care of that right here, right now.