

Children of Transgression (Isaiah 57:1–13)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (5/12/2019)

Introduction

1. Because the watchmen (prophets) were lax, evil came in like a flood.
 - a. These evil times were under Hezekiah's apostate son, Manasseh, whose violent persecutions are described in the first verses of this chapter (2 Kings 21:16).
 - b. Under his reign the worship of Molech was also revived.
 - c. Manasseh sacrificed his own son (2 Kings 21:6).
2. The reference to *offspring of the adulterer* was used to describe illegitimate children of immoral unions, common in Israel's vile worship of the Baals and Asherah.
 - a. The reference is not specifically of innocent children produced in such unions but of those who practiced the fertility rites of the Canaanite religions.
 - b. Interestingly, the people of Jesus' day protested that they were not the offspring of cultic immorality (John 8:41).
3. Isaiah describes what hypocritical religion looks like.
 - a. We need to look at it very carefully because a lot of modern Christianity follows the same corrupt principles.
 - b. Also, we must examine our own hearts because the deceiver would love to divert us from the way of righteousness and peace into the way of the flesh, which is far more alluring and pleasing to our carnal natures.

I. Unfaithful Worship

1. Hypocritical worship (vv. 3, 4)
 - a. The Lord rebukes the nation—“*You draw near*” (for the purpose of worship)—but He identifies the worshipers as hypocrites.
 - 1) They were *children of transgression*, rebels against God's ways and Word, following their own hearts.
 - 2) They were *offspring of deceit*, living a lie, self-deceived and blind to their own dishonesty.
 - b. The charge is more fully developed in verse 11.
 - 1) The issue that allowed for false worship was a failure truly to *fear* God. They lied to themselves (Psalm 36:1, 2).
 - 2) The heart also has a propensity not to *remember* the Lord.
 - c. Their worship was actually mocking God and His Word (v. 4; John 8:43, 47).
2. Vile and sinful worship (vv. 5–8)
 - a. They professed to worship Yahweh, but in reality they devoted themselves to worship Baal and Molech.
 - 1) The worship of *Baal* (“lord”) was a carryover from the failure to drive out the Canaanites completely.

2) Tophet in the valley of Hinnom became the site of the worship of *Molech* (“king”), the god of the Ammonites, where the children of Israel sacrificed their children (Leviticus 20:3–5; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 20:10; Jeremiah 32:31–35).

b. Isaiah described all the places where this false religion was practiced: (1) among the oaks and under every green tree, cult prostitutes plied their fertility rites (v. 5); (2) in the valleys and among the smooth stones, the children were sacrificed to Molech (vv. 5b, 6); (3) on Mount Zion more fertility rites were practiced, and fertility sacrifices were offered on altars to Baal and Asherah (v. 7); and (4) they even practiced idolatry in their very homes in Jerusalem (v. 8).

II. Faithful Rebukes

1. The longsuffering of Yahweh

a. This patience is evident by the fact that the Lord did not punish their sin for long time.

1) The Lord asked, “*Shall I relent [withhold judgment] for these things?*” (v. 6b).

2) Again, “*Have I not held my peace, even for a long time?*” (v. 11b).

3) The result of this patience is that Israel did not see it and/or profit from it: “*You did not fear me.*”

b. It should be obvious that the Lord was not being patient and longsuffering in hopes that Israel would repent and cast off their idolatry. The Lord’s patience had to do with bringing in His faithful Servant and saving His remnant of faithful believers (2 Peter 3:9).

2. Judgment Assured

a. The Lord used such means as necessary to discourage and dissuade the people in their course (v. 10).

b. They did not learn from their hardships (v. 11).

c. The Lord assures them that judgment was coming (vv. 12, 13a).

d. True comfort for repentant and faithful believers is assured, opening the prophecy of comfort promised (v. 13b).

What Can We Take Away?

1. Do you view Jesus as supporting your life, desires, dreams, and ambitions?

2. Do you believe that the Lord will overlook and give pass to your transgressions because of grace?

3. Do you really know who Jesus is as revealed in Scripture?

4. Have you invented your own Jesus whom you love?

5. Idolatry is very subtle, and, as John Owen affirmed, “The heart is an idol factory.”