

Is. 57:1 The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth *it* to heart: and merciful men *are* taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*.

Is. 57:2 He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one* walking in his uprightness.

These are very comforting words to the man of faith. When a person of faith that we love dies, we find great comfort in the fact that that person is in a place of eternal peace in the LORD's presence.

At the time this prophecy was given, the Jewish people looked at death as an entrance into a place of peace and rest until the time that they would be resurrected to new life before the LORD as declared by Job.

Deuteronomy 31:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, **thou shalt sleep with thy fathers**; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

2Samuel 7:12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and **thou shalt sleep with thy fathers**, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

Job 19:25-26 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, **yet in my flesh shall I see God....**

From my perspective as a 21st century believer, I can't help but see a reference to the rapture in this verse as well. We can't ignore the fact that men of faith have experienced horrible things at the hands of wicked men. These times are permitted by God in His wisdom to declare His glory and sufficiency, to draw men to Himself through the testimony of His people and to purify the believer to "come forth as gold."

Job 23:10 But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

After reading this chapter through a few times, I tend to think that the LORD is referencing "evil to come" as a result of His wrath and judgment against those on planet earth who have rejected Him and turned to idols and men in His stead. As I read on to the end of the chapter, the LORD is obviously referencing a time of healing of the nation of Israel in particular along with all the other peoples on earth. The time is coming when planet earth will be cleansed of all that is wicked.

Is. 57:3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

The prophet changes from a comforting tone to a very judgmental tone as he addresses God's rebellious people who have taken up the idolatrous ways of the heathen nations around them.

God strictly forbade the practice of sorcery. His people were to trust Him for their every need.

Leviticus 19:26 & 31 *Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times....Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.*

Deuteronomy 18:10-11 *There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.*

Especially disturbing is the fact that Isaiah addresses his people as the *seed* or children of adulterers and whores. I believe this is a direct reference to the spiritual adultery of the Jewish people in turning from God to idols. The spiritual condition of the people being addressed is a direct result of the teaching and example of their parents and grandparents.

Is. 57:4 **Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood,**

Is. 57:5 **Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?**

Is. 57:6 **Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these?**

This series of questions addresses the activities associated with idol worship. The prophet is pointing out that they are mocking God by their actions. Physical fornication and adultery is associated with idol worship, as is the sacrificing of children that is described in verse 5. Verse 6 seems to be referencing the stones as the material from which the idols were made.

“Should I receive comfort in these?” – The word *comfort* is a reference to having pity as well as taking vengeance. It would seem that you could interpret this phrase two ways—either (my paraphrase):

- Am I just supposed to feel sorry for you for your stupidity? OR
- Don't these actions justify judgment?

Is. 57:7 **Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.**

Is. 57:8 **Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast**

enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it.

Is. 57:9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.

Shrines to idols were often located on the higher geographical points of an area. The JFB Commentary referenced a good verse regarding verse 8; God had specifically warned His people about having hidden idols.

Deuteronomy 27:15 Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

I get a picture of some people that are quite open in their rebellious idol worship and some that are worshipping idols behind closed doors. I would compare the latter to a Christian who goes through all the right motions for people to see on the outside, but in the privacy of their homes their actions deny the truth of the picture they are presenting to the outside world.

One of the saddest phrases in this section of verses is “thou lovedst their bed.” Not only were God’s people in rebellion against YHWH Who had proved His love for them and His ability to provide for and protect them over and over again, they *loved* to worship these utterly impotent and worthless idols.

Verse 9 seems to be continuing a comparison of God’s rebellious people to the prostitutes who prepare themselves with perfumes in order to give pleasure to their partner. The context of the whole section is idol worship, so it makes sense that “the king” is a reference to the idol that they have chosen to acknowledge as “lord” in their life.

I’m not sure what is meant by the sending of messengers to distant places. Maybe it is a reference to turning to other idolatrous kingdoms for help instead of turning to God. Anytime God’s people turn to anyone or anything other than Him for help, they debase themselves. Humility before God in faith is a most honored position. Being humbled before men to rely on their protection, especially in rejection of God, is a very dishonorable position.

Is. 57:10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

This verse seems to indicate that God’s people were willing to extend themselves to the point of weariness in following their idolatrous ways and seeking the protection and good favor of surrounding nations. They never seemed to get discouraged in that pursuit. They would stop and rest and take nourishment as necessary to enable them to stay the course.

This is a really sad picture. God's people are going to great lengths to avoid submitting to Him and following Him in obedience—their God, their Creator Who has proven Himself so undeniably throughout their history. They would much rather be able to follow the desires of the flesh and be the captains of their own fate by declaring loyalty to impotent idols and seeking help from other nations that followed these same idols.

It truly is amazing, but we are guilty of the same thing today. People will go to great lengths to avoid submitting to God Almighty and living in obedience to Him—from creating the “science falsely so called” of evolution that declares there is no Creator to accepting any form of false religion that focuses on the ability of man to earn eternal blessing. These are the thoughts of fools!

1Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

Psalm 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

Galatians 3:2–3 & 11 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?...But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Is. 57:11 And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?

After reading this verse several times, I tend to think the LORD is questioning His people as to why they have chosen to lie to Him and put themselves in a position to fear His judgment rather than to fear Him in such a way that produces obedience. If they would but “remember” His actions on their behalf, it should produce obedience—not rebellion. God then proceeds to answer this question by using another question. He declares that He knows that they are misinterpreting His longsuffering. Instead of understanding it as an act of love that should draw them to repentance (Romans 2:4), they have presumed upon His promises as a license to do as they please (Eccl 8:11).

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Is. 57:12 I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

I like the reading from the NLT for this verse: “Now I will expose your so-called good deeds that you consider so righteous. None of them will benefit or save you.”

We can fool people, but we cannot fool God. He knows our every thought and our every motivation. He is truth, and He will expose our actions for what they truly are.

Psalm 44:21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

Is. 57:13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take *them*: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;

Is. 57:14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

The Hebrew for “companies” support the reference to a collection of idols as understood in several translations. God is again declaring their idols, or even their dependence upon other nations, as useless. They are trusting in things that are as powerless as a leaf is against the wind (or even a tree against a powerful wind). In contrast, those that trust in God will indeed possess the land and “my holy mountain,” which I believe is a reference to Jerusalem and the land of Israel.

Isaiah is delivering his message to the nation of Israel. In context, I believe God is speaking of physical possession of the land according to His covenant with Abraham. Verse 14 seems to support this idea as God speaks of facilitating the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. However, I also believe truthful application can be made regarding people of faith inheriting the heavenly Jerusalem before the earthly kingdom is ushered in.

Is. 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

God again declares through the prophet His uniqueness as The GOD—the One whose name is Holy that dwells in a place of time without end—a place that includes ALL past, present and future. When I looked at the Hebrew for *Holy*, it used the words *sacred* and *sanctuary*. Webster provides a little more insight to these words.

Sacred = possessing the highest title to obedience, honor, reverence, or veneration.

Sanctuary = A sacred and inviolable asylum; a place of refuge and protection; shelter; refuge; protection.

One of the amazing and unable to be understood characteristics of God is His omnipresence—His ability to be everywhere at once. It is also one of the most comforting truths for people of faith. God doesn’t confine Himself to heaven; He chooses to dwell with those who are of a contrite and humble spirit. Again, Webster gives enlightenment.

Contrite = Broken down with grief and penitence; deeply sorrowful for sin because it is displeasing to God; humbly and thoroughly penitent.

Humble = to abase the pride or arrogance of; to reduce the self-sufficiently of; to make meek and submissive.

Since the time of Christ, believers enjoy the privilege of having the Holy Spirit indwelling us without fear of losing His indwelling presence. Until that time, men of faith, such as David, feared having the Spirit taken from them.

Psalm 51:11 *Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.*

I thought it was interesting that God promises to revive (give life to, restore, nourish) the *spirit* of the humble and the *heart* of the contrite. The Hebrew for *spirit* references our life, our being, and for *heart* references our feelings, will and intellect. In other words, this is a reference to the whole person. Humbleness and contriteness go hand-in-hand. These phrases directly relate to the definitions expressed by Webster. I could not help but think of the following verse in James in connection with this verse.

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

Is. 57:16 **For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.**

This is another declaration of the greatness of God over man. God knows that man cannot survive His wrath without His mercy. He is the Creator; He knows our limitations and just how much we can endure.

Is. 57:17 **For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.**

Many of the translations use greed for covetousness, but the Hebrew word emphasizes plunder (that which is taken by force or robbery) and dishonest or unjust gain. God doesn't begrudge us material blessings because He is the source of those blessings. He does, however, get angry when we rob someone else of their God-given blessings. We are to be content with what He gives us.

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

Whether we have much or little in the eyes of the world, we have far more than we deserve. God is sovereign. He has the right to give or take from man as He so chooses.

1 Samuel 2:6-7 *The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.*

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

I think God is saying that when He punished His rebellious people, He withdrew Himself from active presence in their life to allow their punishment to accomplish His purpose. Instead of turning to God in repentance, the people responded with hard hearts and continued on in their rebellious ways. This makes me think of these verses from Revelation regarding the 5th trumpet judgment during the tribulation.

Revelation 9:20-21 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Is. 57:18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

This is a blessed promise from God to His people that He will not let them continue in their wicked ways forever. He will personally bring healing to His people. It's interesting that God's healing is referencing the ways (course of life, mode of action) of His people. This is obviously talking about spiritual healing. God's purposes cannot be thwarted; the nation of Israel will come to a point of repentance and spiritual restoration. When that time comes, they will once again experience God's *leading* (guidance and governance).

"Restore comforts" is a reference to relieving distress and grief and providing rest and relaxation—making them safe through fellowship with Him.

"to his mourners" – Most of the translations seem to indicate that these mourners are part of the nation. I think there is reason to believe that this would include those of other nations who have sided with the nation of Israel in repentance of sin and recognition of Messiah as their Savior. This would make reference in my mind to the judgment of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31-46 regarding those who would enter the millennial kingdom.

Is. 57:19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to *him that is far off*, and to *him that is near*, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.

When God brings about Israel's repentance and spiritual restoration, this will bring about (create) "the fruit of the lips," a response to Him that will naturally be one of praise and thanksgiving.

It seems that the rest of the verse is a word of promise and encouragement to those of His people who turn to Him in repentance and faith, both those in the land and those not yet there, that they will experience safety, happiness and prosperity once again as a nation in fellowship with YHWH.

Is. 57:20 But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

Is. 57:21 *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

In contrast, the wicked, those who reject God, can expect nothing in their future but unrest and total lack of peace.

Just as the previous verse is talking about spiritual healing which is an eternal state, the wicked is a reference to being terminally ill spiritually, which is also an eternal state. Eternity will either be an experience of peace or no peace—of dwelling with God or as an outcast from His presence. God has sovereignly chosen to give us the ability to choose. He is not willing that **any** should perish.

Ezekiel 18:23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

Ezekiel 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

2Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.