

## A Trek Through Isaiah 53 - 57:1-13

Bruce Pike

September 29, 2024

For this week: The prostitute's brood and Yahweh's household 57:1-21

Context

<b><u>The Ideal and the Actual 56:1 - 59:13</u></b>
The waiting people 56:1-8
The divided people 56:9 - 57:21
Ineffective religion 58:1-14
The guilty people 59:1-13

- In the book of the Conqueror (56 - 66): How will God's people fulfill their promise?
- This section (56 - 59) has four parts which contrast the ideal (the people of God as they are intended to be) with the actual (how they actually are).
- Part 2 describes a divided people: The prostitute's brood and Yahweh's household
  - Peace of the righteous 57:1-2
  - Offspring of the prostitute 57:3-10
  - The people of God 57:14-19
  - The wicked 57:20-21
- We will cover the first two headings today

## The prostitute's brood and Yahweh's household 57:1-21

- Structure: A jumbled passage reflecting the jumble of life in a divided society
  - Peace of the righteous (v1-2) contrasts with no peace for the wicked (v20-21)
  - The offspring of adultery (v3-13) contrasts with the family of God (v14-19)

## Peace of the righteous 57:1-2

### Isaiah 57:1-2 (LSB)

1The righteous man perishes, and no man puts it upon his heart; And men of lovingkindness are gathered away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is gathered away from evil,

2He enters into peace; They rest in their beds, Each one who walked in his upright way.

- V1a Disappearance of the righteous
  - Righteous man... men of lovingkindness.
    - True believers
    - Contrast with the wicked leaders of Is 56:9-12.
    - Righteous men. Their faith manifested in their life.
    - men of lovingkindness. Heb: men of unfailing love. Elect because of Yahweh's lovingkindness..
  - Perishes...gathered away.
    - Before their time.
    - Ps 12:1 Save, O Yahweh, for the holy man ceases to be, For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.
  - no one puts it upon his heart...no one understands.
    - No one is concerned.
    - No one understands the reason behind their disappearance.
- V1b-2 The peace of the righteous
  - The righteous man
    - Parallel with "walked in his upright way"
  - Gathered away from evil
    - The purpose of the death of the righteous: to remove them from calamity.
  - They rest in their beds
    - No longer contending with wickedness
  - He enters into peace.
    - Peace with God in eternity

## Offspring of the prostitute 57:3-10

### The children 57:3-5

#### Isaiah 57:3–10 (LSB)

3“But draw near, you sons of a soothsayer, Seed of an adulterer and a prostitute.

4“Against whom do you jest? Against whom do you open wide your mouth And stick out your tongue?  
Are you not children of transgression, Seed of lying,

5Who inflame yourselves among the oaks, Under every green tree, Who slaughter the children in the ravines,  
Under the clefts of the cliffs?

- V3, 4b Their origin
  - But draw near,
    - Contrast with v1-2
    - Speaking to those who have departed from Yahweh.
  - Sons of a soothsayer
    - Sons. Spiritually
    - soothsayer. One who has placed herself under the control of a spiritual being other than Yahweh.
    - Her sons are like her. As Jn 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.
  - Seed of an adulterer and a prostitute
    - Harlotry is used as a metaphor for apostasy over 40 times in the OT. Motyer 353.
    - Adulterer. One who breaks the marriage covenant and abandons a faithful spouse for an illicit relationship.
    - Prostitute. One who sells herself for illicit gain
  - Children of transgression...seed of lying,
    - Sons of the lawbreaker whose whole life is a lie.
    - As Pr 5:5-6 Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol, Lest she watch the path of life; Her tracks are unstable, she does not know it.
- V4a Their attitude
  - Against whom do you jest? Against whom do you open wide your mouth And stick out your tongue?
    - Open derision and scorn for Yahweh and His faithful.
    - They are mocking those who have chosen life, while they themselves are choosing the way of death.
- V5 Their practice
  - Two examples of their practices.
  - inflame yourselves among the oaks
    - Sex with religious prostitutes to induce the god to bring about fertility in the land.
    - Isaiah calls the practice what it is: lust to satisfy human desires.
  - slaughter the children in the ravines
    - Burning infants to placate the god Moloch.
    - Again Isaiah calls it what it is: slaughter.

## The spirit of whoredom 57:6-10

### Isaiah 57:6–10 (LSB)

6“Among the smooth stones of the ravine Is your portion, they are your lot; Even to them you have poured out a drink offering; You have made a grain offering. Shall I relent concerning these things?

7“Upon a mountain lofty and lifted up You have made your bed. You also went up there to offer sacrifice.

8“Behind the door and the doorpost You have set up your memorial; Indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself, And have gone up and made your bed wide, And you have cut a covenant for yourself with them; You have loved their bed; You have looked on their manhood.

9“You have journeyed to the king with oil And increased your perfumes; You have sent your envoys a great distance And made them go down to Sheol.

10“You were tired out by the length of your road, Yet you did not say, ‘It is hopeless.’ You found renewed strength; Therefore you did not faint.

- You, your.
  - Feminine singular. Nation personified as a whore
  - As Hos 4:12 For a spirit of harlotry has led them astray, And they have played the harlot, departing from their God.
  - Seeking security everywhere but with Yahweh.
- V6-7 Idolatry
  - Among the smooth stones of the ravine Is your portion, they are your lot;
    - Isaiah’s wordplay: “smooth stones” and “portion” have the same letters.
    - Stones. May be idols.
    - Smooth. Slippery. Devious.
    - God exchanged for things that deceive
  - Even to them you have poured out a drink offering; You have made a grain offering.
    - Contrast the righteous man in Ps 16:5: Yahweh is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.
  - Shall I relent concerning these things?
    - Yahweh is the Holy One of Israel. Should He be satisfied that His people have exchanged Him for created things, or should He take vengeance?
  - Upon a mountain lofty and lifted up You have made your bed,
    - Maybe to be nearer to the god, or to be up for all to see.
    - Note that in all this idolatry Israel is taking the initiative.
-

- V8 Adultery
  - Behind the door and the doorpost You have set up your memorial;
    - Unclear expression.
    - May mean that the writing of the word of Yahweh on the doorpost (as prescribed in Dt 6:9) is hidden as the door is open wide for adultery.
  - And you have cut a covenant for yourself with them;
    - Turning away from their faithful God
    - Making a covenant with His enemies.
  - You have loved their bed;
    - More than just a financial transaction.
    - Her heart has gone after her lovers
  - You have looked on their manhood.
    - Lit “you saw a hand”.
    - Hand does not usually refer to nakedness.
    - Can refer to resources, including financial. Thus the prostitute appraises her client’s financial resources before sealing the covenant.
    - Can also refer to a memorial. Then the reference is to making a name for herself by association with world powers.
- V9-10 Politics
  - You have journeyed to the king
    - Here is the explanation of the adultery metaphor: Judah’s fascination with politics.
    - In view is Ahaz’ reaching out to Assyria rather than trusting in Yahweh (Is 7) and the embassy to Egypt (Is 30).
    - Journeyed. Lit “You descended”; lowering herself from being the chosen people of God to being just another nation like all the rest.
    - Judah prostituted herself (abandoned Yahweh, went after the great powers of the day) to obtain the security which she could have had from her God.
  - with oil And increased your perfumes;
    - Maybe Judah anointing herself to make herself more attractive to her foreign suitors.
    - Maybe the envoys bringing many gifts of oil and perfume
  - You have sent your envoys a great distance And made them go down to Sheol.
    - Hyperbole showing how far they went.
  - You were tired out by the length of your road, Yet you did not say, ‘It is hopeless.’ You found renewed strength; Therefore you did not faint.
    - Wearied by the burden of their self-sufficient seeking after security.
    - But always able to find the strength for one more try.
    - Note the irony: their God would have given them everything if they had just rested and trusted in Him.

Called to account 57:11-13

Isaiah 57:11–13 (LSB)

11“Of whom were you anxious and fearful When you lied and did not remember Me, Nor even put Me upon your heart? Was I not silent even for a long time So you do not fear Me?

12“I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, But they will not profit you.

13“When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you. But the wind will lift all of them up, And a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in Me will inherit the land And will possess My holy mountain.”

- V11a The anatomy of unbelief
  - Dreading and fearing something beside God
  - Telling lies; deceiving themselves
  - Not remembering God’s word or His deeds.
  - Not putting Him upon their heart. Not acknowledging Him as God in all their ways
- V11b The misunderstanding of God’s patience
  - In response to their sin, God held His peace.
  - Several ways to see this
    - God is dead.
    - God is powerless.
    - God is detached (deism).
    - God doesn’t care.
    - God is alive, all-powerful, involved, jealous for His glory...but also loving, and so patient, seeking their repentance.
  - They chose one of the first four, and so did not fear God. But #5 is the truth.
  - As 2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance..
- V12 The upcoming judgment
  - I will declare
    - Contrast v11 “I held my peace”
    - This is judgment: Exposing and declaring the real worth
    - As Rev 20:11- Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done....15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
  - your righteousness and your deeds
    - All that they have trusted in.
    - All their works intended to accomplish their security
  - they will not profit you.
    - Here is the result: no profit.

- V13a Abandoned to their idols
  - When you cry out.
    - Lit shriek.
    - Despair as they see clearly that they have no hope.
  - let your collection of idols deliver you!
    - Given over to what they worship.
    - As Ro 1:24, 26, 28 God gave them up...
  - But the wind will lift all of them up, And a breath will take them away.
    - Their vaunted refuge is swept away by a breath.
    - As Is 50:8-9 He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a judgment against Me? Let him approach Me. Behold, Lord Yahweh helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; The moth will eat them.
      - The Servant issues His challenge. No one answers.
- V13b True security
  - Available to all who repent
  - he who takes refuge in me
    - The faithful remnant.
    - What the leaders would not do.
    - As 7:12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put Yahweh to the test."
  - will inherit the land And will possess My holy mountain
    - The results of trust
      - A permanent dwelling
      - With Yahweh

Application: Called to account

In Is 57:11-13 God calls His people to account.

Can this happen to us? Yes

In v11

What can cause unbelief? Fear

Fear of what?

- Being hurt
- Not getting the best

How is fear manifested?

- Lying.
  - To ourselves
  - To others
- Not remembering God
- Not considering Him
- Mistaking His patience

In v12

What will the Lord do?

- Declare our righteousness. What we depended upon besides Him
- Declare our deeds. What we did to get glory apart from Him.

What will be the result? No profit

- 1 Cor 3:12-15 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident, for the day will indicate it because it is revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

In v13

What will happen to our idols? Blown away.

What is the remedy? Take refuge in Jesus.

- Jn 15:4-5 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit from itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.



## References

Scripture quotations are from The Legacy Standard Bible, Copyright © 2021 by the Lockman Foundation A Corporation Not For Profit, La Habra, California, all rights reserved.

Calvin, John, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, Baker Books, 2009

Henry, Matthew, *An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Blue Letter Bible, [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Isa/Isa\\_000.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Isa/Isa_000.cfm)

Motyer, Alec, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* in *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Intersity Press, 1999

Oswalt, John, *The Book of Isaiah*, Eerdmans, 1986

Stevenson, Peter, *A Commentary on Isaiah*, BJU Press, 2003

Young, Edward, *The Book of Isaiah*, Eerdmans, 1972