

A Trek Through Isaiah 77 - 57:1-21

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For this week:

- The prostitute's brood and the LORD's household 57:1-21

Context

<u>The Ideal and the Actual 56:1 - 59:13</u>
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?
- In this book, Isaiah speaks of three things
 - The contrast between the ideal community and the actual community
 - God's glorious promises for the faithful.
 - A Conqueror: the third messianic figure who accomplishes God's purpose and fulfills His promises.
- 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).
- Today we will cover part 2

The prostitute's brood and the LORD'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 children of adultery (v3-13) contrasted with the family of God (v14-19)

- V1a Society unfriendly to righteousness

1 The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands.

- Righteous man...devout men.
 - True believers
 - Contrast with the wicked leaders of Is 56:9-12.
 - Devout men. Heb: men of unfailing love. Those who the LORD has chosen.
 - Righteous men. Their faith manifested in their life.
- Perishes...taken away.
 - Before their time.
 - Ps 12:1,8 Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man...8 On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.
- no one lays it to heart...no one understands.
 - No one is concerned.
 - No one understands that their death is not random but has a purpose.

- V1b-2 The peace of the righteous

For the righteous man is taken away from calamity; 2 he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness.

- The righteous man
 - Parallel with "walk in their uprightness"
- The purpose of the death of the righteous.
 - Taken away from calamity.
 - Ps 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.
- He enters into peace.
 - Peace with God in eternity

- V3-10 Offspring of adultery
 - V3-4 Mocking the LORD

3 But you, draw near, sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman. 4 Whom are you mocking? Against whom do you open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue? Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit,

- But you, draw near.
 - Speaking to those who have departed from the LORD.
- Sons...offspring
 - Spiritually
- of the sorceress
 - Sorceress. One who has gone over to the supernatural and opened herself to control by a spiritual being.
 - Her sons are like her. As Jn 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.
- of the adulterer...children of transgression
 - Harlotry is used as a metaphor for apostasy over 40 times in the OT. Motyer 353.
 - Breaking the marriage covenant.
 - Abandoning a faithful spouse for an illicit relationship.
- (of) the loose woman...offspring of deceit,
 - Sons of the adulteress whose whole life is a lie.
 - As Pr 5:5-6 Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; 6 she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.
- Whom are you mocking? Against whom do you open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue?
 - Open derision and scorn for the LORD and His faithful.
 - They are mocking those who have chosen life, while they themselves are choosing the way of death.

- V5 Pagan worship

5 you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree, who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?

- Isaiah describes their apostasy using pre-exilic language. These cultic practices did not exist after the exile.
- He picks out two aspects of Canaanite worship.
- burn with lust 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 your children in the valleys
 - Burning infants to placate the god Moloch.
 - Again Isaiah calls it what it is: slaughter.

○ V6-8 The spirit of whoredom

6 Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, they, are your lot; to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have brought a grain offering. Shall I relent for these things? 7 On a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifice. 8 Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial; for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed, you have gone up to it, you have made it wide; and you have made a covenant for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have looked on nakedness.

■ You.

- Feminine singular. Nation personified as a whore
- As Hos 4:12 For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore.
- Seeking security everywhere but with the LORD.

■ Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, 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
- They. 2x for emphasis that the wicked will get what they have chosen.

○ Contrast the righteous man in Ps 16:5: The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.

■ Shall I relent for these things?

- The LORD is the Holy One of Israel. Should He be satisfied that His people have exchanged Him for created things, or should He take vengeance?

■ On a high and lofty mountain you have set 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.

■ Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial;

- Unclear expression.
- May mean that the writing of the word of the LORD on the doorpost (as prescribed in Dt 6:9) is hidden as the door is open wide for adultery.

■ you have made a covenant for yourself with them

- Turning away from their faithful LORD
- 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 nakedness.

- 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

9 You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far off, and sent down even to Sheol. 10 You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless"; you found new life for your strength, and so you were not faint.

- Here is the explanation of the adultery metaphor: Judah's fascination with politics.
- You journeyed to the king
 - In view is Ahaz' reaching out to Assyria rather than trusting in the LORD (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 the LORD, went after the great powers of the day) to obtain the security which she could have had from her God.
- with oil and multiplied 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
- Sent down even to Sheol.
 - Hyperbole showing how far they went.
- You were wearied....you found new life
 - 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.

- V11-13 Judgment

11 Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart? Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and 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! The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit 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 laying Him to 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 to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach 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...
 - The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away.
 - Their vaunted refuge is swept away by a breath.
 - As Is 50:8-9 Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.
 - The Servant issues His challenge. There is no reply; nothing there.
- V13b True security
 - 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 the Lord to the test."
 - shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain
 - The results of trust
 - A permanent dwelling
 - With the LORD
 - A Millennium promise

- V14-19 The LORD's people

- V14 Their way prepared.

14 And it shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way."

- Build up, build up, prepare the way,

- The high road.
- Prepared for God's people to come to Him.

- remove every obstruction

- Nothing to hinder them.

- V15 God and His household

15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

- Thus says the One

- God speaking

- Speaks of Himself

- who is high and lifted up,

- Above all things

- who inhabits eternity,

- Lit the eternal inhabitant

- Used in Ex 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

- God purposing to dwell with His people eternally.

- whose name is Holy

- God's holiness will be maintained when His people draw near.

- Thus there must be some provision for their sin.

- Here is the work of the Servant Is 53:12 he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

- Speaks of believers
 - Chiastic structure
 - A: Contrite
 - B: lowly spirit
 - B': spirit of the lowly
 - A':heart of the contrite
 - With him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit
 - Contrite. Oppressed by life.
 - Lowly. Not esteemed by themselves or by others.
 - to revive the spirit ... to revive the heart of the contrite.
 - Revive. To restore. The curse removed.
 - Spirit.
 - Inner motivation.
 - Coming to God rather than hiding from Him.
 - Heart.
 - Mind and will.
 - Seeing truth clearly.
 - Choosing what is right.

- V16 Revival enabled

16 For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made.

- Contend. Engage in legal proceedings to satisfy the requirements of His holiness.
- Angry. Wrathful over sin.
- God will bring His judgment and anger to an end. Context tells us that this is by the work of the Servant.
- Grow faint. If He did not, all life would cease.

- V17 The nature of man: enslaved to sin

17 Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart.

- Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain
 - Mankind's continual sin.
- God's responses
 - I was angry. Wrath
 - I struck him. Affliction
 - I hid my face. Withdrawal
- he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart.
 - Still enslaved to sin
 - A different solution is needed.

- V18-19 Healing and restoration

18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, 19 creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the LORD, “and I will heal him.

- I have seen his ways
 - True diagnosis and appreciation of mankind’s nature
- But
 - Mankind’s ways deserve death
 - But God has another way: the work of the Servant
- What God will do
 - Heal him. A new nature.
 - Lead him. Guide in paths of righteousness.
 - restore comfort to him and his mourners.
 - Mourning comes from sorrow over hard circumstances.
 - Comfort.
 - Forgiveness.
 - Loving concern. Replacing affliction.
 - Creating the fruit of the lips.
 - A new creative act that only the Lord can do,.
 - As Heb 13:15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.
- The result
 - Peace, peace.
 - 2x for completeness.
 - No longer enemies of God
 - to the far and to the near.
 - As v8 I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.
 - I will heal him.
 - Complete wholeness

- V20-21 The condition of the wicked

20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. 21 There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

- The condition of the wicked
 - Like the tossing sea.
 - No stability. Moved by every outside influence,
 - It cannot be quiet
 - Quiet: at peace within itself.
 - Cannot be. Unable to be.
 - its waters toss up mire and dirt
 - All the movement only results in corruption.
- Warning
 - Repeats 48:22 which was spoken to the returning exiles
 - Here spoken to the wicked heading for judgment.

Discussion

We will break into three groups for discussion. The questions are

- 1. The peace of the righteous 57:1-2**
 - a. The righteous man is taken away.**
 - b. He enters into peace.**
 - c. There is no peace for the wicked.**
- 2. The spirit of whoredom 57:6-10**
 - a. Departs from the Lord and goes after other lovers who promise security.**
 - b. Prepares her bed**
 - c. Hides her memorial behind the door**
 - d. Makes herself attractive**
 - e. Never wearies**
- 3. The anatomy of unbelief 57:11-13**
 - a. Dreading and fearing something beside God**
 - b. Self-deception**
 - c. Not remembering God's word or His deeds.**
 - d. Not laying Him to heart.**
 - e. Misunderstanding His patience**

Remember to worship the Lord: (1) See (2) Know (3) Respond

For next week:

- The divided people (part 2): the prostitute's brood and the Lord's household 57:1-21

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