

Isaiah 57

Is. 57:1 The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart; And devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from evil,

It is obvious that a *righteous man...is taken away from evil* when he leaves the earth. Verses such as Psalm 12:2, Micah 7:2, and 2 Peter 2:7-9 confirm the same. Note what 2Peter 2:7-9 has to say:

and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

Because sinful conditions exist on the earth, *The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart*. In other words, when the godly depart from the earth, the ungodly fail to comprehend that they have been *taken away from evil* (in this context, the *evil* to come upon the Jewish nation, the only nation to receive *Double for all her sins*—Isaiah 40:2). This may very well explain the early departure of godly *Josiah* (2Kings 22:20; 2Kings 23:29) and why so few in the southern kingdom could comprehend how this principle applied. After all, Josiah was spared from having to observe the decline of the nation and its eventual exile to Babylon. It is no wonder that the unwise Israelites chose evil *Jehoahaz* to succeed him (2Kings 23:30-32), a decision that brought additional turmoil upon the nation.

Before leaving this verse, let's again consider the phrase, "*For the righteous man is taken away from evil.*" God's word confirms that *the righteous* are *taken away from the evil* on the earth through physical death. However, could this phrase point to a specific event that will occur in the future? Could it be making reference to the Rapture of the church? I realize that few verses in the Old Testament describe events that transpire during the Church age, but could this be one of those situations? It is certain that the Rapture will take the church away from the *evil* that will so overwhelm the world during the Tribulation. It is also certain that the removal of the church does not result in an instantaneous worldwide revival. In fact, it may very well be that few will take *it to heart* and come to Christ as a result of the church's departure. Therefore, it is a possibility that this verse is addressing the Rapture. Either way, it confirms that the redeemed, in some cases, are taken off the earth before calamity breaks forth—either by death or by supernatural intervention.

Note: Deliverance from the difficult circumstances associated with the Tribulation should not be the motivation for believing that the church is raptured before the Tribulation begins. As with all theological issues, the true litmus test is what the Scriptures teach rather than what man desires to come to pass.

Is. 57:2 He enters into peace; They rest in their beds, Each one who walked in his upright way.

There is no doubt that the redeemed, who according to Isaiah 57:1 are *taken away from evil*, enter into a peaceful environment when they leave this earth (Isaiah 57:2). This occurred during Old Testament times as a result of the soul and spirit entering into *Abraham's bosom* (Luke 16:19-31), later to be taken to heaven at Christ's ascension. During the Church age, the soul and spirit of the redeemed automatically enter into heaven at the point of physical death (2Corinthians 5:8). However, if the Rapture is the subject of Isaiah 57:1-2; for sure, it will result in the believer entering *into peace*, since it allows the church saints on the earth to receive their glorified bodies as well as *meet the Lord in the air* (1Thessalonians 4:16-17)? It also allows all church saints already in heaven to receive their glorified bodies (1Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Is. 57:3 "But come here, you sons of a sorceress, Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.

Verses 3-13 convey the lack of peace, in fact, the degree of unrest experienced by the disobedient within the Jewish nation. The cause of disobedience is defined in these verses as idolatry. Consider the following as it relates to this subject.

The word "*sorceress*" is interesting in that all sorcerers find great pleasure in the occult—that which pertains to demonic activity. One involved with idolatry is, therefore, greatly influenced by the powers of darkness (read 1Corinthians 10:19-20). In other words, the Jews have repeatedly opened themselves to the activity and influence of Satan.

Israel had married the Father in Exodus 24. Consequently, her infatuation with idols is classified as adultery—*Offspring of and adulterer and a prostitute* (v.3). Scripture confirms that the nation, for the most part throughout her history, has involved herself in this type of activity. Isaiah, therefore, uses the word "*Offspring,*" realizing that his readers are descendants of an unfaithful nation.

Is. 57:4 "Against whom do you jest? Against whom do you open wide your mouth And stick out your tongue? Are you not children of rebellion, Offspring of deceit,

Idolatry has frequently caused the Jews to belittle Jehovah, even *stick out* their *tongue* at Him. It is for this reason that the Father, through Isaiah, classifies them as *children of rebellion, Offspring of deceit*.

Is. 57:5 Who inflame yourselves among the oaks, Under every luxuriant tree, Who slaughter the children in the ravines, Under the clefts of the crags?

Verses 5-9 describe the practices involved in the worship of idols. They *inflame* themselves, (meaning to be stimulated sexually—evidently pointing to sexual activity), as they worship objects such as *luxuriant* trees. They also *slaughter the children in the ravines, Under the clefts of the crags*, confirming that they sacrifice their *children* as part of their worship. The notes associated with Isaiah 57:9 give more specifics concerning this subject.

Is. 57:6 "Among the smooth stones of the ravine Is your portion, they are your lot; Even to them you have poured out a libation, You have made a grain offering. Shall I relent concerning these things?

The words "*smooth stones*" can be interpreted, "symbols of fertility gods," meaning that these fertility gods are worshipped as well.

Is. 57:7 "Upon a high and lofty mountain You have made your bed. You also went up there to offer sacrifice.

They also offer sacrifices to the *mountain* gods.

Is. 57:8 "And behind the door and the doorpost You have set up your sign; Indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself; And have gone up and made your bed wide. And you have made an agreement for yourself with them, You have loved their bed, You have looked on their manhood.

Based on Deuteronomy 6:9 and 11:20, God's words (the Scriptures) were to be written on the *doorposts* of every Jewish home. Instead, as Isaiah 57:8 states, *You have set up your sign*, pointing to the memorials to their idols that they allow to replace the Scriptures. Phrases such as "*uncovered yourself*," "*made your bed wide*," "*loved their bed*," and "*looked on their manhood*," confirm that such activity is viewed by God as spiritual adultery.

Is. 57:9 "And 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.

According to Amos 5:26, the word "*king*" can make reference to an idol. This is the case here in Isaiah 57:9. In fact, the RSV interprets, "*And you have journeyed to the king with oil*" (NASB), as, "*You journeyed to Molech with oil*," *Molech* being the god of the Ammonites. It is interesting that the worship of *Molech* included the sacrifice of children (read Jeremiah 32:35). The Jews even go so far as to send *envoys a great distance* (to surrounding nations) in hopes of discovering additional idols or making additional alliances. It is obvious from verses such as 1Kings 11:4-8, 1Kings 16:31-32, and 2Kings 16:10-13 that Israel has pursued the gods of the Gentiles. In every case, however, regardless of who has been involved or when it occurred, the result has been devastating for the Jewish people—*made them go down to Sheol*.

Is. 57:10 "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 would think that the absence of God's peace, as well as the total ineptness of idols, would have caused the entire Jewish nation to repent. Instead, they have *found renewed strength* to continue their fruitless pursuit of that which does not profit. Even though they are *tired out by the length of their road*, they refuse to say "*It is hopeless*." What a powerful testimony to the deceitfulness of sin! In fact, what greater proof, motivation, and confirmation would one need for pursuing Jesus above all else? Thank you Lord for your *indescribable gift* (2Corinthians 9:15).

Is. 57:11 ¶ "Of whom were you worried and fearful, When you lied, and did not remember Me, Nor give Me a thought? Was I not silent even for a long time So you do not fear Me?

The nation's estrangement from God as a result of her idolatry is addressed here—and *did not remember Me, Nor give Me a thought*. The phrase, "*Was I not silent even for a long time*," is rendered in the RSV as, "*Have I not held my peace, even for a long time*." Obviously, there is no peace for the idolater, for peace is a *fruit of the Spirit* of God (Galatians 5:22).

Is. 57:12 "I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, But they will not profit you.

Unlike idols, God can speak, as the notes associated with Isaiah 48:3 confirm. However, if He should *declare* the *righteousness* as well as the *deeds* of the nation, they would not profit her.

Why? Her *righteousness and...deeds*, as seen through the eyes of the nation, were totally unrighteous in the eyes of God.

Is. 57:13 "When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you. But the wind will carry all of them up, And a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in Me shall inherit the land, And shall possess My holy mountain."

God challenges the Jewish people to call on their *idols* for deliverance from calamity, realizing all along that they are worthless. He then promises that anyone within the nation who takes *refuge in Him* will *inherit the land*. The phrase, "*the land*," points to that strip of real estate which begins at the river Euphrates and ends at the river of Egypt. It was promised to Abraham (Genesis 17:8) and his descendants (Genesis 15:18) but has never been totally possessed and inhabited by the nation. Therefore, to remain true to His promises, God will resurrect Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and etc. (all the Old Testament believers) so they might enjoy the land during the Millennium. In Ezekiel 48 we find a detailed description as to how the land will be divided among the twelve tribes as Jesus reigns from Jerusalem.

Notice the phrase, "*And shall possess My holy mountain*" (Isaiah 57:13). The *mountain* addressed here will truly be a *holy mountain* (also read Isaiah 27:13, 56:6-8, 66:20); for the Millennial *temple* (Ezekiel 40:48-41:26) as well as Millennial Jerusalem (Ezekiel 48:30-35) will be situated on top of it. Just how tall is this *mountain* to be? According to Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-2, it will be the tallest *mountain* in the world. All the redeemed Jews will have access to it as they come to worship the Messiah ruling from Jerusalem (Ezekiel 48:35; Revelation 20:4). For more details concerning this *mountain*, you can read the notes associated with Isaiah 2:2-3.

Is. 57:14 ¶ And it shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, Remove every obstacle out of the way of My people."

When every Jew on the earth is spiritually regenerated at the end of the Tribulation, Jehovah will see to it that they are brought back to the land promised to the nation. For more input relating to this subject, you can read the notes associated with Isaiah 14:1-2 and 11:11-12.

Is. 57:15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite."

We discovered earlier on that one of the main purposes of the Tribulation is to humble the Jews and bring them to repentance. Once they are broken as a nation and admit their error, Jehovah will *revive the spirit and heart* of every Jew on the earth. It is then, at the end of the Tribulation, that *all Israel will be saved* (Romans 11:26) and the regathering addressed in Isaiah 57:14 can soon begin.

Is. 57:16 "For I will not contend forever, Neither will I always be angry; For the spirit would grow faint before Me, And the breath of those whom I have made."

Should Jehovah retain His *anger...forever*, all mankind would be totally annihilated. As far as His relationship with the Jews, He will allow them to reap the negative consequences of their disobedience until they repent at the end of the Tribulation. After they repent and accept Jesus as Messiah, His *anger* will never again be directed toward the Jewish people.

Is. 57:17 "Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him; I hid My face and was angry, And he went on turning away, in the way of his heart.

Jehovah has responded in anger to the Jews because of their persistent sin. As is confirmed on a number of occasions in this book, they have generally been a rebellious people since their birth. Obviously, the Jews have disobeyed because they have chosen on their own to do so (*turning away, in the way of his heart*), rather than having been programmed by God to do so, as some have erroneously concluded. Although angry with the Jews, God loves the Jews, as verse 18 confirms.

Is. 57:18 "I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners,

Even with all that the nation has done to rebel against Jehovah, His grace will allow Him to *heal, lead, and comfort* His wayward wife at the end of the Tribulation.

Is. 57:19 Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," Says the Lord, "and I will heal him."

Once the nation repents at the end of the Tribulation, she will be granted *peace* and healing, resulting in *praise* directed toward the God who has responded so graciously.

Is. 57:20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud.

The *wicked*, on the other hand, never experience peace; for their souls *are like the tossing sea*, never *quiet* due to the constant turmoil.

Is. 57:21 "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

May we never forget, no matter what we face in life, that peace is incapable of inhabiting the soul of the *wicked*, both in this life and the life to come.

This completes the section of Isaiah titled, *That her iniquity has been removed* (Isaiah 49:1-57:21). The notes associated with Isaiah 40:2 address this subject in much greater detail.