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I Live in a High and Holy Place, But Also with Those Who are Contrite

57: 14-21

I live in a high and holy place, but also with those who are contrite DIG: Who would be reading this prophecy? When would they be reading it? What road needed to be built up and prepared? What obstacles needed to be removed out of the way of God's people? What does it mean to be lowly and contrite? What does the LORD promise here? In what sense does the prophet picture the people of Isra'el mourning?

REFLECT: Are you lowly and contrite or high and lofty? What obstacles are hindering ADONAI's work in your life? What areas of your spiritual highway are in need of repair? If the wicked are like the tossing sea, how would you picture those at peace with God? Which do you feel like? Why? What might you need to quiet things down? What word of peace (57:19) might Jesus speak to calm you?

In this near historical prophecy, Isaiah speaks to the nation of Judah and city of Jerusalem about one hundred years later during the ministry of Jeremiah. Through His prophet, God offers His forgiveness if only they would repent from their wickedness.

After rebuking the religious leaders of Jerusalem for only looking out for their own selfish interests (**to see link click [Jl](#) - Israel's Watchmen Are Blind, They All Lack Judgment**), and accusing the citizens of Judah of spiritual adultery, (see **[Jm](#) - You Have Made Your Bed on Every Hill, There You Went Up to Offer Sacrifices**) ADONAI offers both groups mercy: **Not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)**. **Grace** is getting what you *don't* deserve, while **mercy** is *not* getting what you *do* deserve. Because of their wickedness both of those groups deserved judgment. Instead, **God** gives them **hope (Titus 2:13)**.



The invitation to: **Build up, build up, prepare a road (57:14a)** for **the people** of faith points to that **road** spoken of by the forerunner earlier in **Isaiah** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Be - John the Baptist Prepares the Way**). He will be a **voice of one calling in the desert**. “**Prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God** (see **Gm - The Highway of Holiness Will Be There**). **Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the Sh’kinah glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it! For the mouth of ADONAI has spoken (40:3-5).**”

Whatever prevented them from coming to Him and taking refuge in Him had to be removed. **God said: Remove the obstacles, every stumbling block, out of the way of My people (57:14b)**. The picture of a *stumbling block* is significant here because of its use earlier: **And He will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel He will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem He will be a trap and a snare (8:14)**. There **ADONAI** is the *stumbling block* to those who refuse to give **Him** a place in their lives. As a result, they **stumble over Him** instead of allowing **Him** to be **the Sanctuary** that **He** wants to be.

Here the context is similar to **8:14** above. **God is the Holy One** and there is a *stumbling block* in **the people’s** way. But the tone is different. There, **Isaiah** was commanded to leave **this people** to their *stumbling* ways (**8:11**), and seal **up the testimony (8:16)**, while **God hid His face from the house of Jacob (8:17)**. Here, **the prophet** is empowered to speak to **My people**, and to let **them** hear the command to **remove** every *stumbling block* in **their** way so **ADONAI** could stop hiding from **them (57:17)**, and **heal them (6:10)**. What could have made the difference between **8:14-17** and here? Because **the Servant** has been *crushed (53:10)*, **the LORD** could sit in the dust with **those** who have been *crushed (57:15)*. Those who would humble **themselves** and **live with the Holy One** would find a perfectly smooth **road** to salvation.

For this is what the high and lofty One says - He who lives forever, literally *inhabiter of eternity*. The word *sakan* (**Exodus 25:8, 29:45**) is used of **ADONAI** coming to dwell temporarily among **His people** in the Tabernacle. And just as at the exodus, when **He** gathered **His people** to **Himself** by redemption (see the commentary on **Exodus Bz - Redemption**) with the deliberate purpose of dwelling among them (**Exodus 29:42-46**), so now **He** purposes exactly the same but with **forever** in mind.

Whose name is Holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also the one who is contrite, literally *crushed*, **and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of those crushed** under life's burdens (**57:15**). **He** is the **God** of eternity. Mankind, however, doesn't last very long on this earth. The eternal **God** promises to take those who do not trust in themselves, but trust in **Him**, and **He** covers **them** as a mother hen covers her chicks (**Matthew 23:37**). What **peace** and security there is for those who belong to **the LORD**. Even though **He** is majestic, **high and lofty**, **He** fellowships with those who are **contrite and lowly in spirit**. **ADONAI** is very **high**, but **He** is not so **high** that **He** is removed from our struggles. **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet without sin. Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need** (Hebrews 4:15-16).

What **ADONAI** was looking for then, and what **He** is looking for today is brokenness over sin. David wrote **Psalms 34** when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who eventually drove him away (**First Samuel 21:13**): **He is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit** (**Psalms 34:18**). After committing adultery with Bathsheba, he also wrote: **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise** (**Psalms 51:17**). But David repented saying: **I have sinned against the LORD** (**2 Samuel 12:13**), and therefore, reestablished his relationship with **ADONAI** (**1 John 1:8-10**).

How can **God** bridge the gap between our **sin** and **His** holiness? **ADONAI** must satisfy **His** own legal requirements and bring an end to **His** anger. This is accomplished by the suffering Servant of **the LORD** (**53:1-12**). The theological name for this is propitiation, which is the averting of **God's** wrath by means of the substitutionary sacrifice of **Yeshua Messiah**. **His** shed blood satisfies every claim of **God's** holiness and justice so that **God** is free to act on behalf of sinners (**Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2**). **I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry** (**57:16a**). **He** is eternal, but **His** anger is **not**. If we **repent**, the **LORD's** accusations and anger **will not last forever** because of **His** grace. As

Jesus said: **There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent (Luke 15:7).**

For then the one would faint away because of Me - the very people I have created (57:16b). Here **ADONAI** expresses **His** dilemma. On the one hand, if **He** could not find a way of abating **His** righteous anger, the humans that **He** had **created** would be forever separated from **Him**. But, on the other hand, how could **He** fail to punish sin and continue to be the just **God** of all creation (**Genesis 18:17-19**)? The answer to this puzzle continues to be **the Suffering Servant (53:10-12)**. The only question is that tricky little matter of free will. Would **those He created** choose **His sin** offering, or go **their** own way?

In the past **He** had to be harsh with **His people** because of **their sinful greed** and independence. **I was enraged by their sinful greed**, or *covetousness* (see my commentary on **Exodus Dt - You Shall Not Covet Anything That Belongs To Your Neighbor**). **God** said: **I punished them, and hid My face in anger, yet they kept on in their willful ways (57:17)**. The **sin** being described is **greed**, which seemingly summed up *all their sins*. *Covetousness* is the proud, unrestrained motivation that wishes to make itself the center of the universe. It is not surprising, therefore, that the commandment not to covet is last. If you break the tenth commandment, do you not also break the first?

If only **they** would repent **He** would forgive **them**, giving healing, guidance and **comfort**. **He** said: **I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to the mourners of Israel**. The nation is pictured here as theoretically asking for forgiveness, being forgiven, and mourning, as it were, over her **sins** that are pictured as being dead and gone. As the prophet **Micah** said: **You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19)**.

The natural result of forgiveness is **praise**, and therefore, **praise** would be heard **on the lips** of the forgiven sinners (**57:18-19a**). **God** would **heal** the contrite and brokenhearted **Israelites; He will comfort, guide and restore them** back to a relationship with **Him**. If **they** would only turn from **their wicked** ways. **He** so desperately wanted to **heal them** and change from anger to loving concern.

The forgiven ones would enjoy **peace**. **ADONAI** would no longer be at enmity with **His children**. **"Peace, peace to those far and near,"** says **the LORD**. **"And I will heal them"** (**57:19b**). This **peace** would not be a matter of birthright, but a matter of choice. **They** could say no to **God** and make it stick. **Comfort** and restoration, however, will be the state of **the righteous, the wicked will not** be so fortunate.

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud (57:20). The contrast between **the righteous** and **the wicked** is especially relevant from here to the end of the book where **Isaiah** focuses on balancing the ideas of salvation and vengeance (**59:17, 61:2, 63,4-6**). This is probably one of the most picturesque descriptions of **the wicked** in the Bible. Like the troubled and restless **sea, the wicked** can find **no peace** no matter how hard **they** try or **no** matter how much **peace they** pretend to have (**Psalm 37** and **73**). **They** are like a hunted criminal looking for deliverance and safety, but doomed for punishment because **they** refuse to turn to **God**.

There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked (57:21). Like gravity, this is an axiom of life. **In contrast with the abundant peace promised to the righteous, unrest like that of a troubled sea with its mire and dirt is the lot of the wicked.** **Jesus'** parable is an excellent illustration of this fact (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ II - The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector**). There is no **rest for the wicked** in this life, and there will be no **peace** in the next life. Each of the three-fold messages (**That Her Warfare Had Been Completed - 40:12 to 48:22; That Her Sin Had Been Pardoned - 49:1 to 57:21; and That She Had Received from the Lord Double for All Her Sin - 58:1 to 66:24**) ends with one verse that describes the state of **the wicked**, and that is what we have here.

The first of the three-fold message was **that her warfare had been completed**. It was completed with the seventy years of Babylonian captivity (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). Babylon was conquered and the Jews were permitted to go back. **God** had demonstrated His absolute superiority over the idols by doing something never before done in human history, causing a conquered **people, His people**, to return from exile to **their** native Land. That section ended with the judgment of the evil ones: **There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked (48:22).**

The second of the three-fold message, which ends here, is **that her sin had been pardoned**. In this section, the reason that **Isra'el's sin** was **pardoned** was because of the death of **the Servant of the LORD**. This section also ends with the condemnation of the wicked: **There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked (57:21).** And we will see the condemnation of **the wicked** again at the end of the last of the three-fold message in **Chapter 66**.