

**Comfort and Hope  
Back to the End Again  
Isaiah 57:13b – 21**

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Now that we know about the uselessness of self-righteousness and the total bankruptcy of trying to do life on our own, what about those who have opted to follow and remain faithful to the Lord; even when the culture turns against them. The message turns back to those who are truly members of God's household, the faithful remnant. By the way, the culture has always been against us.

After saying what will happen to those who are not followers of YAHWEH, He tells us at the end of verse 13 about what happens to those who are part of the remnant and remain faithful or truly repent and become faithful, as in the case of King Manasseh.

Isaiah 57:13b

"...But the one who takes refuge in Me will inherit the land And possess My holy mountain." (NASB 2020)

Those who repent, those who see who and what they really are, in the light of the holiness of God, and turn to take refuge in Him...win.

The language used would take the observant Jew back to the promise of inheritance that was given via Moses and Joshua. That took place as a result of obedience. Joshua then obediently took the land from the usurpers who were in it. The struggle that they are having in the culture of King Manasseh's politically correct idolatry is that they are once again involved in a battle with the usurper, Satan.

The picture now though becomes much clearer, the battle is not against a nation or just certain individuals, but it is spiritual in nature, and it is against the unseen powers who have aligned themselves in rebellion with Lucifer. Then, as now, a decision is required. "The audience has to make a decision for Yahweh if it is not to lose its share of the land, to people who might seem to have much less right to it, in the course of settling for a different portion/lot (v. 6)." (Goldingay 2012, 322)

No stone worshipers, no followers who have placed the creation over the creator, will be involved here. The true resident of Zion will be those who have chosen to be faithful and loyal to God.

We deal with the same pressures from the culture today. As we have seen, the base differences between then and now do not exist. There really is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Our conclusion to what we see and deal with every day was clearly stated by King Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 12:13–14

“After all this, there is only one thing to say: have reverence for God, and obey his commands, because this is all that human beings were created for. God is going to judge everything we do, whether good or bad, even things done in secret.” (GNB)

God promises that those who trust him for protection and for their needs have the great assurance that they will inherit the land, for God owns it (Exod 9:29; 19:5; Lev 25:23; Ps 24:1) and will give it to them. They will take possession of the sacred mountain of Zion, just as 56:7 indicates. (Smith 2009, 560)

Suddenly we find ourselves at the end of the Great Tribulation witnessing God Himself entering the Temple on Mount Zion (Ezekiel 43:1 – 12) and living among His people on Mount Zion.

The one who takes refuge in the Lord is promised that they will live with God. Considering that promise, as believers, how should we live? What will it be like?

Do we truly understand the holiness of God and what it is those of us who have trusted in the completed work of Jesus Christ have signed up for? Jesus hints at the total picture hinted at here in Matthew 5 that will be the possession of the faithful.

Matthew 5:3–12

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the **kingdom of heaven**. Blessed are those who mourn, for they **shall be comforted**. Blessed are the meek, for they **shall inherit the earth**. Blessed are **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied**. Blessed are the merciful, for they **shall receive mercy**. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they **shall see God**. Blessed are the peacemakers, for **they shall be called sons of God**. Blessed are **those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for **your reward is great in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (ESV)

Just as those living under the persecution of King Manasseh before he repented, we find ourselves in a culture rushing headlong to destruction; a culture which has embraced all of the negative aspects of Romans 1:22 – 32, a culture in need of the Savior.

Romans 1:22–32

“They say they are wise, but they are fools; instead of worshipping the immortal God, they worship images made to look like mortal human beings or birds or animals or reptiles. And so God has given those people over to do the filthy things their hearts desire, and they do shameful things with each other. They exchange the truth about God for a lie; they worship and serve what God has created instead of the Creator himself, who is to be praised for ever! Amen. Because they do this, God has given them over to shameful passions. Even the women pervert the natural use of their sex by unnatural acts. In the same way the men give up natural sexual relations with women and burn with passion for each other. Men do shameful things with each other, and as a result they bring upon themselves the punishment they deserve for their wrongdoing. Because those people refuse to keep in mind the true knowledge about God, he has given them over to corrupted minds, so that they do the things that they should not do. They are filled with all kinds of wickedness, evil, greed, and vice; they are full of jealousy, murder, fighting, deceit, and malice. They gossip and speak evil of one another; they are hateful to God, insolent, proud, and boastful; they think of more ways to do evil; they disobey their parents; they have no conscience; they do not keep their promises, and they show no kindness or pity for others. They know that God’s law

says that people who live in this way deserve death. Yet, not only do they continue to do these very things, but they even approve of others who do them.” (GNB)

When we truly comprehend the promise given to us as believers of living with God for all eternity, we realize this is not possible because of our own actions but only because of the achievement of Jesus Christ on the cross, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Our lives change and we suddenly discover that we want to see others, that we know or love, to be there.

We are to love our neighbor as ourself (Luke 10:25 – 29). Who is my neighbor? I love me enough to want to be there, but do I love you enough to tell you I want you to be there too? Or have we embraced the same lie of the culture that was embraced by Judah?

One of the most alarming trends is the severe drop in the proportion of born-again Christians sharing the gospel with the nonbelievers. The ideal form of church growth, of course, is by attracting nonbelievers to follow Christ and become part of a community of faith. However, in just the last ten years, the share of believers expressing the gospel to non-Christians has plummeted from more than half (55 percent) to barely one-third (35 percent). If the gospel remains a secret, it is virtually impossible for the Church to attract new adherents. (Barna 2016, Kindle Location 320)

Penn Jillette is a magician and part of the team Penn and Teller. He is currently an atheist, yet after someone offered him a NT, he had this to say. “I’ve always said,” Jillette explained, “I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize. I don’t respect that at all. If you believe there is a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward. How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate someone to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?” (Jillette 2010)

Returning to our text, we see that action, even after the Great Tribulation is over, is still required. This required action comes from the voice of an unknown person, or so some commentaries say.

Isaiah 57:14

“And it will be said, “Build up, build up, prepare the way, Remove every obstacle from the way of My people.”” (NASB 2020)

This really sounds familiar. It should be. In Isaiah 40:3, we heard the same command given. It was a scene from the Divine Council and was prophetic since it was, in advance, to John the Baptist from the Divine Council. That command is referenced again here Isaiah 57.

Let’s take another look at the original command.

Isaiah 40:3–5

“The voice of one calling out, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. “Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the uneven ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”” (NASB 2020)

### **John the Baptist**

John the Baptist quoted this section of scripture when questioned about his ministry. And now we see the same idea come up again in the context of the last days and prophecy being fulfilled.

“All four Gospels quoted this passage as applying to John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ (Matt. 3:1–4; Mark 1:1–4; Luke 1:76–79; John 1:23). In this passage the entire nation Israel was pictured as in a desert place (Isa. 40:3), but anticipating the glorious deliverance of God.” (Walvoord 1990, 109)

Now we are at that time.

In ancient times a herald, or forerunner, would be sent out to clear the road of obstacles or repair any pot-holes in the road prior to a journey by the king. This passage states that a forerunner will precede the arrival of the Messianic King, as with any other ancient king. In the New Testament these words are specifically applied to John the Baptist, whose words were quoted in the previous section. (Fruchtenbaum 1998, 44)

Let's look again at this as a conversation in the divine council.

In Isaiah 40:2, God has made the command to comfort x2 His people, to speak kindly and to call out to them. In verse 3 there is an unknown voice responding to the command and we find ourselves wondering who that voice is? Fast forward to Isaiah 57 and after words of comfort we see verse 14 and we are not told who but "it will be said."

When we studied the book of Daniel, we saw the Divine Council assembled in Daniel 7:9 – 14 to deal with the antichrist and witnessed Messiah as the cloud rider. We learn from Revelation that the scene in Daniel 7 is the same scene as in Revelation 4 & 5. Daniel was given a vision of a future meeting of the Divine Council. Isaiah has been to a future meeting as well.

John 1:19–23

"And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (ESV)

John the Baptist is the unknown voice in Isaiah 40. Is he also in 57?

With the arrival of the messiah, the apostle John casts John the Baptist in Isaiah's role. Like the prophet of old, John the Baptist has "stood in the council" (Jer 23:16–22) and answered the call. To a Jew familiar with the Old Testament, the pattern would not be lost. As had been the case at the time of Isaiah, Yahweh's council had met in regard to the fate of an apostate Israel. Isaiah had been sent to a spiritually blind and deaf nation. The calling of John the Baptist tells the reader that Yahweh's divine council is in session again, only this time the aim is to launch the kingdom of God with the second Yahweh, now incarnate, as its point man. (Heiser 2015, 273)

But when we arrive at Isaiah 57:14, we are now at the end of the Great Tribulation, as referenced in verse 13, and God is now with His people. It is time to bring all of God's people back home, just as Isaiah has alluded to several times leading up to this. The apostasy is over, and the point man is again speaking.

Yes, this points not only to the, at the time, future pending ministry of John the Baptist, but now, this points to the future completion of what was started when Jesus came the first time.

The voice though is the same voice as before.

Jesus is indeed returning; the road must be prepared for Him just as it would be for any incoming King. "It was customary to construct processional avenues for approaching dignitaries and for idols carried in parade. The wilderness and desert represent the barren waste where God's people dwelt, complete with obstacles and impediments to overcome, and through which He would come to them with refreshment, as He did formerly at Mount Sinai. The idea is that He was certainly coming and His people should prepare for His appearing." (Constable 2003, Is 40:3)

Isaiah 40:3

“The voice of one calling out, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (NASB 2020)

Isaiah 57:14

“And it will be said, “Build up, build up, prepare the way, Remove every obstacle from the way of My people.”” (NASB 2020)

Initially the call is to prepare the way for the Lord, now He has arrived and entered Jerusalem from the east, as predicted. Now it is all about regathering all His people from wherever they have gone to in the world to hide from the Beast to cross the Jordan into the land. The picture from Joshua is fulfilled in Jesus.

Mark 1:9–13

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.” (NASB95)

We miss something in the English translation. “...the heavens opening...”.

In the Greek the word used is σχιζομένου (schizomenous) which comes from the word schizo. This word actually means to split apart or tear apart. It is used in the Septuagint version of Exodus 14:21, talking about the parting of the Red Sea.

In the events of the exodus, YAHWEH delivered His people from Egypt with victory over the enemy, the fallen former members of His divine council, the gods of Egypt. The nation then was in the wilderness for 40 years and they failed more than once. Jesus would be in the wilderness for 40 days and He would not fail.

As the nation approached the promised land, they did so from the wilderness to the south and east crossing the Jordan at Jericho. God Himself once again made the road for them stopping the water of the Jordan for them to cross over on dry land giving them access into the land (Joshua 3:9 – 4:14). In the first exodus, the nation was to remove the trespassers from the land which had been given to them by YAHWEH. They failed. When Jesus returns, He will do the same. Trespassers will be removed from the planet which He purchased on the cross. Just as He did for Israel clearing a path for them, God will be the one who makes this road.

The usurpers are gone, and the persecution of the Beast has ended. It is time for the final regathering of His people from all over the planet. The ultimate Exodus is taking place. His people truly delivered. The people need a clear easy to travel road to come to Zion and claim what it is the Lord has for them, their inheritance. It is time to move to God’s holy mountain.

The call is to remove every obstacle from the way of His people. This is more than simple road clearing. Obstacle is the Hebrew word מִכְסוֹל (miksol).

Stumbling block (spiritual)...some immaterial obstacle or impediment; often with the implication of causing to stumble into iniquity...any obstacle or impediment; especially that which can be tripped over...failure understood as stumbling...the act of tripping or walking with an uneasy gait. (Lexham Press 2017)

The obstacles that exist in the present day, the unbelief, the lack of faith resulting in no repentance; that obstacle will be removed and has been because of the work of the Suffering Servant.

Just as crossing the Red Sea on dry land was a road made for His people, we now see Him doing the same at the end of the age.

If Israel is going to resume its journey on the road that God has chosen, the preparatory work must be directed to their hearts. (Briley 2000-, 252-253)

Because of the Suffering Servant, more specifically “But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5, NASB 2020)

The obstacle to has been removed and His people, now with an open road in front of them, must realize their need for Him and cross over.

At the end of the age, those of the remnant will clearly see that. Not only physically will the road be built and made ready for the people to return, but their hearts will no longer be hard.

Joel 2:32

“But all who ask the LORD for help will be saved. As the LORD has said, ‘Some in Jerusalem will escape; those whom I choose will survive.’” (GNB)

The entrance requirements for those who take refuge in Him, those who live with God are stated next.

Isaiah 57:15

“For this is what the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, says: “I dwell in 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.”” (NASB 2020)

This is a message from the Creator of the Universe, and He wants to ensure there is no doubt of just who God is. God speaks clearly of Himself, so clearly that Paul makes the same clear statement of this to his protégé Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:12–16

“Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses. And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and **only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.**” (NLT)

For those of us who want to be in a right relationship with God, the first thing we have to do is understand who it is we are dealing with.

God is:

- High – yet He will live with His faithful followers for eternity (John 14:1 – 3).
- Exalted – yet He loves you and me (John 3:16).
- One who lives forever – but He came in a burning bush to reveal Himself (Exodus 3).
- Whose name is Holy – and His expectation is that we will be holy as well (1 Peter 1:13 – 16).

But here is the thing, after He tells us who He is, He then tells us where He lives and that is what makes all of the difference.

Isaiah 57:15b “ ...I dwell in 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.” (NASB 2020)

The first location He tells us He lives in, we can't go to. "But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (Exodus 33:20, ESV)

Fallen angels can't go there. In our human bodies, we simply cannot go there either, this makes God unapproachable, unless something else takes place. It did.

Romans 5:6–10

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (ESV)

The God of the universe went looking for us on our lowly sin covered turf.

Luke 19:10

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (ESV)

Luke 15:4–7

"Which one of you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, would not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go look for the one that is lost until he finds it? Then when he has found it, he places it on his shoulders, rejoicing. Returning home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, telling them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.' I tell you, in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent." (NET)

God is not like us. For us, there's no neighborhood too classy for us to move up to, if only we can afford it. But God doesn't value upward mobility. He values downward mobility—not because he feels uncomfortable dwelling in the high and holy place, but because down low is where he finds the people who are open to him. (Ortlund, Jr. and Hughes 2005, 383)

Psalms 116:5–6

"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful. The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me." (ESV)

1 Corinthians 1:26–31

"Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God. God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. Therefore, as the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD.'" (NLT)

Yes, He is God Almighty, but He loves us, and that love drives Him to seek out those who are willing to hear Him and follow Him above all else. The pattern was already well established in 700 BC when Isaiah wrote this verse, it did not change with Jesus and Paul even pointed out God called the Corinthians to repentance. Really?

God, it turns out, deliberately chose the foolish things of the world, the cross and the Corinthian believers, so that he could remove forever, from every human creature, any possible grounds on their part of standing in the divine presence with something in their hands. The ground is level at the foot of the cross; not a single thing that any of us possesses will advantage him/her before the living God—not brilliance,

“clout,” achievement, money, or prestige. By choosing the lowly Corinthians God declared that he has forever ruled out every imaginable human system of gaining his favor. It is all—“trust him completely” (v. 31)—or nothing. (Fee 1987, 84)

God’s transcendence does not rule out his dwelling with the crushed and low-spirited. How can this be? One can say two things. First, since God is the only high and holy one, the people he most definitely cannot live with are those who try to make themselves his equals (cf. 2:6–22 and 14:4–21). The only people who have any hope of living with him are those who recognize who he is and who they are not. (Oswalt 1998, 487-488)

And for them, not only will He live with them, but He promises to revive their heart and their spirit.

What our Lord does is really quite simple...He offers life to those who have been beat down and ground down by life to near nothing. Reaching down to us, amazingly, He does not just offer life, but that would be enough for those of us who identify as beaten down. No, He says He will give us much more.

John 10:7–10

“So Jesus said to them again, “I tell you the solemn truth, I am the door for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.**” (NET)

1 Corinthians 2:9

“However, as the scripture says: “What no one ever saw or heard, what no one ever thought could happen, is the very thing God prepared for those who love him.”” (GNB)

That is the God I want to follow. The one who gives life abundantly (περισσὸν) “which is not ordinarily encountered, extraordinary, remarkable...extraordinary in amount, abundant, profuse...going beyond what is necessary. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 805)

Isaiah 57:16

“For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would grow faint before Me, And the breath of those whom I have made.” (NASB 2020)

How will God get folks who are beaten down by life want to live with Him? The word is mercy. He does not immediately zap us when we fail.

God is holy, for any of us to be eligible there must be an “unexplained restraint within his own nature, a refusal to visit his anger to its full extent. Accuse is ‘to enter into legal proceedings against’, and be angry implies that there is that which lawfully excites divine opposition and wrath. But were the appropriate judgment to be passed, people’s vital powers (spirit) and their hold on life itself (breath) would collapse.” (Motyer 1996, 476)

We do not get what we truly deserve. Instead, we are given what we did not earn and do not deserve. We get mercy, we get grace.

Ephesians 2:4–10

“But **God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us** even when we were dead because of our offenses, made us alive together with the Messiah (by grace you have been saved), raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly realm in the Messiah Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the limitless riches of his grace that comes to us through his kindness in the Messiah Jesus. **For by such grace you have been saved through faith. This does not come from you; it is the gift of God and not the result of actions, to put a stop to all boasting.** For we are God’s masterpiece, created in the Messiah Jesus to perform good actions that God prepared long ago to be our way of life.” (ISV)

This grace and mercy which He freely gives those who turn to Him is amazing in the face of the rebellion and sin of His people. What is deserved is judgement.

Isaiah 57:17–19

““Because of the wrongful act 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. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners, Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far away and to him who is near,” Says the LORD, “and I will heal him.”” (NASB 2020)

God’s people, especially in the days of Manasseh, were busy seeking ways to make money, and most of it contrary to what the law taught. Judgement has begun and because of this; He will hide His face. Sowing and reaping takes place. God will step back and no longer intervene in their affairs for a time. Prophet after prophet has warned them. There will be a time of silence, and there was until John the Baptist uttered the first words heard in over 200 years, repent.

In spite of Israel’s rebellion, God has looked on their ways and will “heal” (save and restore) them and lead them. He will also “restore comfort” (or consolation) to them, even those among them who mourn. God takes the initiative because of who He is, not because their ways have changed. (Horton 2000, 416-417)

God has already revealed how He will do just that with the description of the work of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.

This concept of divine hiding or abandoning people is a human way of expressing man’s sense of separation from God because of sinfulness and suffering, as well as God’s refusal to respond to human requests for his intervention. (Smith 2009, 565)

Mercy and grace. Totally underserved yet promised and delivered through the Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ. Not to all, as we have already seen, but to the remnant. He does discipline His people though allowing them have what they want until they want it no longer.

Isaiah 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,” (NASB 2020)

We already know He is with the lowly, the remnant, but here we see a healing that will take place that is so profound, it will change actions and behavior. This is because at the end of the age, after Messiah returns, He will pour out His Holy Spirit on His people.

This empowering comes to those who have mourned. Having mourned for the way they had lived, having repented upon seeing their Messiah, they are now righteous. This is God’s grace on full display.

Healing is only the beginning of God’s work, for he will also “guide, lead” them in the future so that they will not be left alone without divine assistance. The third divine act will be for God to “repay” (NIV “restore”) comfort to him (the righteous) and to those who mourn because of the way they were mistreated in the past (cf. 54:7–8; 57:1–2; 61:2–3). Everything that caused heartache, pain, violence, oppression, and loss in the past will be removed so that God’s healing power might transform this evil world and create a new world based on his grace. (Smith 2009, 566)

Those who have been delivered by Messiah, those who truly have taken refuge and are now counted as citizens of Mount Zion, those who have had the roads cleared for their return because they believe; they will praise the Lord.

Isaiah 57:19

““Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far away and to him who is near,” Says the LORD, “and I will heal him.”” (NASB 2020)

There are those who are prepared to enter into the Kingdom, they are the true remnant of Israel. Verse 19 describes what is taking place in that group worldwide.

A literal translation of the Hebrew is, ‘I will make comfort complete for him and for his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips’ or ‘I will make comfort complete for him, that is, for his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips’. The reference, therefore, is not to the voice of praise but to whatever it is right for ‘mourners’ to say. What Isaiah expresses poetically is the fundamental truth that without repentance there is no entering into the comforts of salvation, and only God can sovereignly create the ability to repent. (Motyer 1996, 477)

They have repented, they have mourned, and they now have peace with God and with each other. They are citizens of Mount Zion because they have taken refuge in Him. They are the contrite and lowly of heart who are being revived and prepared to live with God for eternity.

But at the end of the Great Tribulation, there is another group who has remained as well. This is a group that did not believe. They have not mourned, and they go by an entirely different name...the wicked.

Isaiah 57:20–21

“But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”” (NASB 2020)

Wait a minute, we just witnessed peace being one of the attributes to be experienced personally by His people at the end of the age. Yes that is indeed true, but there have always been those who were not interested in that. Earlier in chapter 57, we learned who these were, idol worshippers involved with the worship of the creation rather than the creator. They will discover there is no peace there. In fact they have missed the true source of peace, but they are still His people? Or are they?

“God is at peace with his people, but are his people at peace with him? God has declared that he will heal his people, but do his people wish to be healed? God will enable his people to live the righteous lives they are unable to live in their own strength, but do his people want to live righteous lives? Here is the mystery of divine/human relationships. As humans we are helpless either to reconcile ourselves to God or to live the kinds of lives he calls us to live.

He must reconcile us to himself and impart his righteousness to us. But unless we exercise the right of choice and choose to be reconciled and made righteous, God can do nothing more. Thus there is no peace for the wicked.” (Oswalt 1998, 491-492)

The “wicked” referred to are not the heathen outside Israel, but the heathen, i.e., those estranged from God, within Israel itself. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 551)

If there are wicked within Judah, within Israel at the time of Manasseh as well as at the time Messiah returns, what does that say for the church?

You have the true church, those who have indeed been washed in the blood and have placed their entire future into the hands of the Savior. Then you have “the church.” Now we are at the same place that statisticians are today. You have those with a Biblical worldview reflective of what is truth, then you have those who are more reflective of the culture.

This is not a new thing, but a simple repeat of what has happened time and time again. The enemy has a plan that seems to work up to and until there is a God given revival. But once the revival ends, it is once again time for the enemy to sneak in his false teaching and ideas into the mix.

Judah thought they were in because they were Jews. They went to Temple but they had no true faith in God, it was cultural salvation, not real. This is why all of the prophets with pretty much the same theme...repent.

This theme is still playing today. "Jesus did not come to improve us or enhance us or make us bigger and better or more successful. He came to save us from our sins, to forgive us and transform us, to transfer us from death to life and from the kingdom of satan to the kingdom of God. That's the gospel. He came so we could die to our old rebellious ways and live new lives of obedience in Him." (Brown 2021, 42)

Romans 10:8–10

"But what does it say? "The message is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart." This is the message about faith that we are proclaiming: If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with his heart and is justified, and declares with his mouth and is saved." (ISV)

His salvation is indeed near and available to all who accept it.

Salvation is a Gift

- Admit you are a sinner.
- Believe in your heart that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and He rose from the dead three days later.
- Call on the name of the Lord.

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