

**Then and Now**  
**There Really is Nothing New Under the Sun**  
**Isaiah 56:9 – 57:4**

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Full disclosure, as we begin this section of Isaiah, any similarity in the text to be a commentary on the present political environment and culture is solely due to the work of the Holy Spirit. Solomon was correct when he wrote “History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. Sometimes people say, “Here is something new!” But actually, it is old; nothing is ever truly new. We don’t remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.” (Ecclesiastes 1:9–11, NLT)

One more thing, I will not be very politically correct in this study.

Isaiah 46 is another of those chapters that should have ended sooner than it does in our Bibles. The chapter division point really makes no sense as you read the text in the context of the book.

The Lord has been speaking through Isaiah about the coming day in the future when He rescues His people, pours out His Spirit on the planet and all of His promises come true. He has been talking to the remnant. There always has been a small number of true believers in Judah and Israel who were faithfully loyal.

Now Isaiah will turn back to the majority and address those living in the present day in Judah. He will be quite graphic in some of what is said.

Isaiah departs from the previous line of thought to address the leadership of the nation one more time. They will know they have been warned and it is entirely possible that this is all being directed to a young man who will soon or has recently become King and under whose long reign the nation apostatizes.

The ideas discussed earlier in Isaiah, addressing a growing number of those who had rejected following YAHWEH, under King Manasseh, come to full fruition. He did repent at the end of his life, but it was too

late. What comes out clearly though is the hatred for those who are faithful to YAHWEH by those who are doing their own thing.

The resemblance in ch. 56:9–57 to the features of Manasseh's reign is very striking. (Birks 1878, 274)

2 Chronicles 33:1–9

“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, following the detestable practices of the pagan nations that the LORD had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites. He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father, Hezekiah, had broken down. He constructed altars for the images of Baal and set up Asherah poles. He also bowed before all the powers of the heavens and worshiped them. He built pagan altars in the Temple of the LORD, the place where the LORD had said, “My name will remain in Jerusalem forever.” He built these altars for all the powers of the heavens in both courtyards of the LORD's Temple. Manasseh also sacrificed his own sons in the fire in the valley of Ben-Hinnom. He practiced sorcery, divination, and witchcraft, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the LORD's sight, arousing his anger. Manasseh even took a carved idol he had made and set it up in God's Temple, the very place where God had told David and his son Solomon: “My name will be honored forever in this Temple and in Jerusalem—the city I have chosen from among all the tribes of Israel. If the Israelites will be careful to obey my commands—all the laws, decrees, and regulations given through Moses—I will not send them into exile from this land that I set aside for your ancestors.” But Manasseh led the people of Judah and Jerusalem to do even more evil than the pagan nations that the LORD had destroyed when the people of Israel entered the land.” (NLT)

God gave Hezekiah 15 more years. He had a son Manasseh, and he was bad news.

The pattern used in King Manasseh's administration sounds vaguely familiar students of history.

We see the tragic progression in Manasseh's sin.

- First, idolatry is tolerated among God's people.
- Then idolatry is promoted.
- Then idolatry is supported and funded.
- Then the worship of the true God is undermined.
- Then the worshippers of the true God are persecuted and murdered.
- Then the judgment of God soon comes. (Guzik 2005, 2 Ki 21:16)

Isaiah issues the indictment.

Isaiah 56:9–12

“All you wild animals, All you animals in the forest, Come to eat. His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; And the dogs are greedy, they are never satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one to his unjust gain, without exception. “Come,” they say, “let's get wine, and let's drink heavily of intoxicating drink; And tomorrow will be like today, only more so.”” (NASB 2020)

As we begin our exploration of this section of Isaiah, we will experience a déjà vu like feeling between what is going on in the text to what is taking place in our culture today.

Take heart believer, this is a message of comfort for us, but a message of judgement for those who have embraced the world. The “earth dwellers” of Revelation.

We see today that “Christians are a minority in an increasingly hostile culture. We are exiles, not geographically, but morally and spiritually.” (Lutzer 2018, 31)

There is a hostility toward Christians and Christianity at least as irrational as any anti-Semitism. In fact, recently in the United States overt hostility toward certain Christians has been far greater than overt hostility toward Jews. (Yancey and Williamson 2015, Kindle Location 140-142)

As we go into this section of Isaiah, it would be helpful to first look at it from around 10,000 feet up in outline form. What is going on, why and where is this going?

What we see starting in Isaiah 56:9 involves two groups with a heavy emphasis on the faithless group. But we will clearly see the care and love of the Lord for those who are His. "One group is destined for peace (2, 19), the Lord dwells with them (15) and leads them home (14); the other he abandons to what help their idols can give (13) and they know no peace (21)." (Motyer 1999, 398)

An invitation to the nations of the world to attack Judah followed by a general indictment against the religious and civil leadership of Judah. (Isaiah 56:9 – 12)

Persecution of the faithful by the faithless. (Isaiah 57:1)

Removal of the faithful from the scene judgement starts. (Isaiah 57:2)

The downward spiral of religious apostasy outlined:

- Turning towards the occult, immorality and human trafficking for solutions. (Isaiah 57:3)
- Mocking those who follow the Lord. (Isaiah 57:4)
- Support for immorality and connecting with nature. (Isaiah 57:5a, Romans 1:23)
- Support for abortion and infanticide. (Isaiah 57:5b)
- Worshipping nature and things of the world in new locations. (Isaiah 57:6)
- Trade and diplomacy with multiple nations. (Isaiah 57:7)
- The memorialization of immorality and false worship in their homes. (Isaiah 57:8a)
- Setting up and allowing images of immorality and false gods into their homes. (Isaiah 57:8b)
- Promoting and using sexually oriented materials. (Isaiah 57:8c)
- Participating in and promoting immorality internationally in the name of religion. (Isaiah 57:9a)
- Creating international coalitions with other leaders and religions. (Isaiah 57:9b)
- Changing the culture to promote political security. (Isaiah 57:9c)
- Doubling down on changing the culture by adding in foreign practices for political security. (Isaiah 57:9c - 10)

Why? Maybe more reminders of their sin and punishment for it are needed? (Isaiah 57:11)

Time is up. (Isaiah 12-13)

- False righteousness and justice will be displayed to all. (Isaiah 57:12)
- Everything you relied on will disappear. (Isaiah 57:13a)
- Only those who turn to YAHWEH will survive. (Isaiah 57:13b)

Repentance is required, but there is a point where even what is stated in 2 Chronicles 7: 13 – 14 is no longer an option for the people of Judah, and Manasseh will take them there. Even a revival with King Josiah was not enough as it did not impact deep enough into the culture. The word from YAHWEH.

2 Chronicles 34:25

"Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched." (ESV)

Back to the indictment

Isaiah 56:9

“All you wild animals, All you animals in the forest, Come to eat.” (NASB 2020)

Metaphors are heavily used in this part of Isaiah. By using the term “wild animals,” the intent is triggering the minds of those Jews who did study Torah at one time or another. The warning of the curse from faithlessness begins in Leviticus.

Leviticus 26:22

“And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.” (ESV)

Moses then adds to this in one of his sermons.

Deuteronomy 28:25–26

**“The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies.** You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. **And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth,** and there shall be no one to frighten them away.” (ESV)

“The loss of dominion over land to “wild beasts” can refer to literal animals as well as the surrounding nations. The use of “wild beasts” is likely metaphorical in the woe oracle against Israel in Isa 56:9–12. This is particularly likely because Egypt is defined as a source or land of beasts such as snakes (see 30:6). The leaders of Israel are like “shepherds” who have no understanding, “watchmen” who are blind, or “dogs” who do not bark when danger approaches. The danger to which they are silent and blind are “beasts of the field,” which is poetically paralleled with “beasts in the forest” (56:9). Isaiah literally invites the beasts to come for a feast. The failure of Israel’s leaders means that those who should not exercise dominion are doing so by dining where they do not belong.” (Wenkel 2011, 256)

Isaiah is calling to the nations, the wild animals, to come and eat. Why?

Isaiah 56:10

“His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber;” (NASB 2020)

Various locations in and around Judah had watchtowers, this included all cities. It was the job of the watchman to remain alert and sound the alarm. Excellent eyesight was a prerequisite. Here though, we are told they are blind. Tough to depend on someone who is wholly unqualified and cannot see.

Who is Isaiah talking about here? In Ezekiel 3:17, the prophet Ezekiel is appointed by God to be a watchman for the people. His job was to warn the people anytime God spoke to Him. Here, “they may have been the numerous false prophets and religious leaders of Isaiah’s day, along with rulers and government officials who were foolish, incompetent, lazy, greedy, or irresponsible.” (Thomas Nelson 1996, Is 56:9)

All throughout the Old Testament we see the true prophet, one who has been appointed by YAHWEH and stood before the Divine Council being confronted by pretenders, false prophets. In contrast to the true prophets of God who were uniformly persecuted, the false prophet would have status with the King as well as riches since they only spoke good. Prophets for pay. Jeremiah discusses this.

Jeremiah 23:16–22

“The LORD who rules over all says to the people of Jerusalem: “Do not listen to what those prophets are saying to you. They are filling you with false hopes. They are reporting visions of their own imaginations, not something the LORD has given them to say. They continually say to those who reject what the LORD has said, ‘Things will go well for you!’ They say to all those who follow the stubborn inclinations of their own hearts, ‘Nothing bad will happen to you!’ Yet which of them has ever stood in the LORD’s inner circle

so they could see and hear what he has to say? Which of them have ever paid attention or listened to what he has said? But just watch! The wrath of the LORD will come like a storm! Like a raging storm it will rage down on the heads of those who are wicked. The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has fully carried out his intended purposes. In days to come you people will come to understand this clearly. I did not send those prophets. Yet they were in a hurry to give their message. I did not tell them anything. Yet they prophesied anyway. But if they had stood in my inner circle, they would have proclaimed my message to my people. They would have caused my people to turn from their wicked ways and stop doing the evil things they are doing.” (NET)

Isaiah is stating that which Jeremiah said is obvious, they are blind.

Worse than that, they also do not know anything. A prophet would know what it is the Lord was going to do (Amos 3:7), a false prophet would know nothing. Because they are ignorant and self serving, they are no better than a mute dog who is unable to warn by barking.

Here is the problem for us today, this group of phonies still exist. Now they wear suits and have titles and a platform and are known as false teachers. Peter warned about them. Their intent is to deceive, lead astray and leave you thinking everything is ok between you and God without the basic conversation about the need for repentance. Sin and a discussion of it does not build a following or audience.

2 Peter 2:1–3

“False prophets appeared in the past among the people, and in the same way false teachers will appear among you. They will bring in destructive, untrue doctrines, and will deny the Master who redeemed them, and so they will bring upon themselves sudden destruction. Even so, many will follow their immoral ways; and because of what they do, others will speak evil of the Way of truth. In their greed these false teachers will make a profit out of telling you made-up stories. For a long time now their Judge has been ready, and their Destroyer has been wide awake!” (GNB)

False teaching is everywhere today. Discernment is a needed spiritual gift.

The false prophets did what false prophets almost always do: they appealed to the ego of their listeners by telling them that God owes them special blessings because they are the people of God. They preached blessings without repentance, prosperity without piety. They had a theology of success, but not a theology of suffering. They preached about the good life in this present world and gave no thought to the world to come. (Lutzer 2018, 37)

“For example, the vast majority of American adults (69%) self-identify as “Christian” and embrace many basic tenets of the faith. But a closer look shows that at the same time, many in this group hold views clearly in conflict with traditional teachings and only 9% actually possess a biblical worldview, according to George Barna, CRC Director of Research.” (Barna 2021)

Why? Because the vast majority of churches have failed and no longer teach the word of God but have moved onto another teaching.

“And within this larger universe of self-identified Christians is a segment known as “Integrated Disciples,” a minority of American adults (6%) who possess a biblical worldview, and demonstrate a consistent understanding and application of biblical principles.” (Barna 2021)

False teaching shows up today in the guise of legalism, variants of the Judaizer problem Paul had, a rejection of God's word as being inerrant, a rejection of the Great Commission to a newly defined type of social justice , Progressive or woke Christianity.

About this new form of Progressive Christianity, “It is not only destructive, but incoherent. It is a war of words against the Word. It is a revolution which elevates will over reason, the group over the person, and human power over higher authority. What is rejected—reason, the person, and authority—are the three

characteristics of the Logos himself. The Logos is the mind of God, communicated in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the author of, and authority over, all. Whether explicitly or not, he is the ultimate target of the woke revolt.” (Mering 2021, 15-16)

Peter obviously agreed with Isaiah about the ultimate goal of false teachers and false prophets.

Isaiah 56:11

“And the dogs are greedy, they are never satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one to his unjust gain, without exception.” (NASB 2020)

False prophets and false teachers are in it for the money and the fame. They love having a book on the bestseller list and raking in the cash from donations as well as from the sale of their pronouncements.

They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days and hastening their deaths by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course, whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. (Henry 1994, 1191-1192)

In Isaiah we see, as the closing phrase in the indictment, the belief that nothing ever changes.

Isaiah 56:12

““Come,” they say, “let’s get wine, and let’s drink heavily of intoxicating drink; And tomorrow will be like today, only more so.”” (NASB 2020)

The people could not escape the responsibility for their sin, but with the failure of the leaders to carry out their tasks, the probability that the people would fall into sin was vastly increased. And what is the sin of the leadership? Every one of them, without exception, has chosen to put his own way before God’s way or his people’s way. (Oswalt 1998, 469)

Isaiah 56:12

“Each one says, ‘Come on, I’ll get some wine! Let’s guzzle some beer! Tomorrow will be just like today! We’ll have everything we want!’” (NET)

2 Peter 3:3–7

“Above all, understand this: In the last days blatant scoffers will come, being propelled by their own evil urges and saying, “Where is his promised return? For ever since our ancestors died, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.” For they deliberately suppress this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water. Through these things the world existing at that time was destroyed when it was deluged with water. But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, by being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.” (NET)

The false prophets, so called religious leaders and the King with his administration are determined, based on what we just have seen to be unqualified, unmotivated self-centered, ignorant undiscerning improvident drunkards.

Now that we have the indictment, it is time for the presentation of evidence to support the allegations. Despite their willful blindness, these are still religious people. That is also the problem, they are religious people, not necessarily faithful followers of YAHWEH, but they did have the ritual down.

When Jesus Christ was here ministering, the biggest problem He had was with religious people. Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and teachers of the law...the professionals...were all a problem. His condemnation of them in Matthew 23:13 – 34 was clear.

A dirty secret...religious people are still a problem today.

Isaiah 57:1–2

“The righteous person perishes, and no one takes it to heart; And devout people are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous person is taken away from evil, He enters into peace; They rest in their beds, Each one who walked in his upright way.” (NASB 2020)

In Manasseh’s day the nation as a whole was stupid. While the leaders were indulging in luxury and a lascivious lifestyle, in sharp contrast “the righteous” (the godly remnant) were perishing and no one seemed to care or notice. (Horton 2000, 410-411)

Persecution of believers became politically correct under Manasseh, as well as idol worship, infanticide, you name it.

2 Kings 21:16

“Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.” (ESV)

The innocent blood included those who were faithfully following YAHWEH as well as the embracing by the culture of infanticide through the worship of Molech.

Of the two groups being discussed, the first are those who are faithful. The numbers are shrinking. With Manasseh on the throne, anyone who speaks up for the Lord now has a target on their back. They are marked for removal from the culture, just like what we are seeing today. But “Christians today are faced with at least three ways to respond: (1) assimilate the secular culture, (2) isolate from the secular culture, or (3) engage the secular culture. In light of the gospel, the only choice for the Christ follower is to engage. (Lutzer 2018, 12-13)

Manasseh did repent later in life and tried to undo what he caused without much success. A son of his, Josiah did manage to see revival, but it was already too late because the leadership of the nation had so encouraged the moral degradation that took place, it was far too embedded into the culture to do away with it. Once Josiah was gone, so was the revival and the downward spiral to exile accelerated.

I wonder about our culture today? Where are we on the dashboard?

Jesus talked about our day in Matthew 24

Matthew 24:9–13

“Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (NLT)

The prophet Micah also saw the developments surrounding the end of the age.

Micah 7:2–3

“The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net. Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together.” (ESV)

We are not there yet. The opportunities still exist, for now, to engage the culture with the claims of Jesus Christ. But the similarities between what Isaiah saw beginning under Manasseh and what we see today are strangely familiar.

Those who served King Hezekiah and were faithful followers of YAHWEH lost their positions with the new King. They quietly disappeared.

The society then was so bad that the righteous people in Israel (also called devout and those who walk uprightly) had to die in order to find peace. Observing the evil all around apparently frustrated them. They could do nothing to turn the nation back to the Lord. The only way the righteous could be spared from such frustration was to die. (Martin 1985, 1112)

And many did die in those days, many at the hands of persecution, such as Isaiah did ultimately, but not all. Over the years something began to happen, and it was hard to see as “no one takes it to heart.”

Fewer and fewer believers were evident. “God allowed this disappearance of the devout to spare them the judgment He would bring on the evil nation and its ungodly rulers. Few people in the nation, however, understood this reason for the depletion of the righteous.” (Constable 2003, Is 57:1)

Isaiah 57:2

“He enters into peace; They rest in their beds, Each one who walked in his upright way.” (NASB 2020)  
For those who lived through the time of Hezekiah and entered into the time of Manasseh, many quietly died. God in His goodness often takes the righteous to Himself to deliver them from a coming disaster.

2 Chronicles 34:26–28

“Say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to seek an oracle from the LORD: “This is what the LORD God of Israel says concerning the words you have heard: ‘You displayed a sensitive spirit and humbled yourself before God when you heard his words concerning this place and its residents. You humbled yourself before me, tore your clothes and wept before me, and I have heard you,’ says the LORD. ‘Therefore I will allow you to die and be buried in peace. You will not have to witness all the disaster I will bring on this place and its residents.’ ” ” Then they reported back to the king.” (NET)

We are about to experience something similar as we too have a promise from the King.

1 Thessalonians 5:4–10

“But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the darkness for the day to overtake you like a thief would. For you all are sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must stay alert and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation. **For God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** He died for us so that whether we are alert or asleep we will come to life together with him.” (NET)

1 Corinthians 15:51–57

“Listen, I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Now when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will happen, “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” (NET)

1 Thessalonians 4:14–18

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be

suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (NET)

Those who are faithful followers are rescued, those who are not, are left to reap what they sowed. “Men of piety (chesed, the love of God and man) are swept away, without there being any one to understand or consider that (kī unfolds the object to be considered and laid to heart, viz., what is involved in this carrying away when regarded as a providential event) the righteous is swept away “from the evil,” i.e., that he may be saved from the approaching punishment (compare 2 Kings 22:20).” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 542)

The disappearance of so many righteous people should be something that people notice, but that is not the case per Isaiah. This will also be the case post-rapture. The righteous disappear, and the world does not understand, because it is not in the enemies' best interests for them to understand.

#### 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12

“For the secret of this lawlessness is already at work, but only until the person now holding it back gets out of the way. Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of his mouth, rendering him powerless by the manifestation of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the power of Satan. He will use every kind of power, including miraculous signs, lying wonders, and every type of evil to deceive those who are dying, those who refused to love the truth that would save them. **For this reason, God will send them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.** Then all who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.” (ISV)

We know what has taken place with those who are faithful, they are being rescued by the Lord. But what about the other group, those who are not part of the remnant, those who are not being rescued.

#### Isaiah 57:3–4

“But come here, you sons of a sorceress, Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute! Of whom do you make fun? Against whom do you open wide your mouth And stick out your tongue? Are you not children of rebellion, Offspring of deceit,” (NASB 2020)

Remember, all the nation of Judah believes themselves to be part of the elect of God. They believe they are righteous because they “do religion.” They have confused the being = the doing to the doing = salvation. They have created their own worldview combining elements of familiar religion, Judaism with idol worship. That is simply not to be, but that lie exists today.

#### Matthew 7:13–14

“Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate is wide and the road is spacious that leads to destruction, and many people are entering by it. How narrow is the gate and how constricted is the road that leads to life, and there aren't many people who find it!” (ISV)

Evidence of the lie and the similarities with what was taking place in Isaiah's world do not end there. We see a generation opting for the large road today. “Asked to describe the kind of world that Millennials are seeking, Barna outlined seven components to the Millennials' outlook:

1. Government should continue to expand in reach, authority, power, and spending, in order to facilitate a more desirable way of living.
2. Public policies and programs should be more flexible and fluid. But the syncretistic worldview they possess means that American culture would also be less predictable and consistent than in the past, owing to the inherently contradictory worldview positions adopted by Americans.
3. More episodes of violence and combativeness across the nation, attributable to the self-righteousness and sense of personal sovereignty maintained by emergent adults, combined with their dismissal of the legitimacy of institutional authority, causing them to be unwilling to compromise and to feel that not getting their way is a personal threat or challenge.

4. Political tensions will remain significant in the short-term due to the divergent views of core perspectives related to national vision, disdain for compromise, national moral recalibrations, and the revision of U.S. history.
5. A redefined Christian community that will be smaller in numbers, less influential, and less economically robust. That will include changes such as fewer people and less money being designated to global Christian missions, and existing privileges received by churches, such as tax exemptions and land-use exceptions, being withdrawn.
6. Interpersonal relationships will be more difficult to sustain due to declining levels of trust, diminished willingness to compromise, heightened reliance of technology for communication, and disappointments produced by the lack of moral consensus.
7. Reshaped family units given fewer formal marriages, increased levels of divorce and separation, liberalized sexual morality, and the reduced appeal of raising children.” (Barna, Release #3: The Seismic Generational Shift in Worldview: Millennials Seek a Nation Without God, Bible and Churches 2021)

Isaiah 57:3–4

“But come here, you sons of a sorceress, Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute! “Of whom do you make fun? Against whom do you open wide your mouth And stick out your tongue? Are you not children of rebellion, Offspring of deceit,” (NASB 2020)

Sorcery was a forbidden practice in Israel, but it did exist in the surrounding nations and Israel indulged. Included “the preparation and administration of drugs was under the supervision of sorcerers, the word *pharmakos* came to be connected with the art of sorcery and magic. Thus drugs were used for medicine, poison, entertainment, escape, mind control, the occult, religious experience, love potions, and spells. This was the age when men thought they could control the world and manipulate the gods. This was the age of magic, and drugs played a major part in that era. They were the means and the tools by which man attempted to play God and create his own world. What is now interesting is that Western man is a resurgence of the magical elements of sorcery, witchcraft, the occult, astrology, and Satanism. There is an acknowledged attitude toward drug abuse which views it as a magical solution to personal problems.” (Morey 1993, 39)

Part of the worship of false gods in the nations around Judah, which did involve the use of substances to place one into an altered state of consciousness, was ritualized sex and temple prostitution. This was not part of the YAHWEH approved worship taking place in Jerusalem but was imported from the nations along with their false gods. When Manasseh became King, in came sorcery, drug usage, occult practices and divination, as well as the other immoral cultic practices in the worship of Baal, Molech and others.

There is also a demonic aspect to all of this as the false gods are nothing more than divine beings who have rebelled against YAHWEH.

Sorceress is one who had opened herself to the ‘control’ of a spirit or supernatural entity. Adulterers and prostitutes are both singular in the Hebrew. Adultery is the breaking of a pledge and is therefore used figuratively for reneging on sworn loyalty to the Lord. Prostitution is entering upon an illicit relationship. Adultery therefore expresses the principle (unfaithfulness to the covenant); prostitution the practice (devotion to lovers other than the Lord). The adulterer gives his love elsewhere; the prostitute takes other lovers. (J. A. Motyer 1996, 471-472)

You would find them everywhere: visiting the shrine prostitutes under the green trees in the groves; offering their children in the fire in the valley; worshiping under the cliffs and by the smooth boulders; sacrificing up in the mountains; and committing fornication behind the doors of their houses. Publicly and privately, the people were devoted to idols and immorality. (Wiersbe 1996, 150)

Also, as we have seen earlier in Isaiah, the reliance on foreign governments was another form of adultery, a lack of trust in YAHWEH at the national level.

Imagine this, those who are involved with this lifestyle, make fun of those who are remaining faithful to YAHWEH and following His law. The problem with that, “they gave coarse and insulting expression to their feeling of superiority by “opening their mouth wide” in a gesture of derision, and even far more so by “stretching [their] tongue far out.” As a result, though the objects of their ridicule were in the first place fellow countrymen, in the last analysis, what they did was directed at the Lord Most High.” (Leupold 1971, 274)

Mocking and making fun of those who hold to following the Lord, then and now, has another aspect that we need to remember. When someone makes fun of us or attacks us because of our faith, they are personally attacking the Lord. He takes it all very personally. Paul found this out when he was confronted by Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

Acts 9:1–6

“Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them in shackles to Jerusalem. Now as he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told to you what you must do.”” (NASB 2020)

That same thought is here in verse 4 as the unfaithful make fun of the faithful.

The idea is to be part of the faithful, those who are being rescued, not those who will be judged. Why are those who are mocking here? They are rebels, as we all are due to Genesis 3 and they have believed the lie they have been told as we all at one time did. Remember, they think they are in because they are Jews, but they are not faithful, they have more in common with sorcerers, adulterers, and prostitutes than they do with those they are making fun of.

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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