

and tomorrow will be like this day,
great beyond measure."

Israel's Futile Idolatry

57 The righteous man perishes,
and no one lays it to heart;
devout men are taken away,
while no one understands.
For the righteous man is taken away from calamity;
he enters into peace;
they rest in their beds
who walk in their uprightness.
But you, draw near,
sons of the sorceress,
offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman.
Whom are you mocking?
Against whom do you open your mouth wide
and stick out your tongue?
Are you not children of transgression,
the offspring of deceit,
you who burn with lust among the oaks,
under every green tree,
who slaughter your children in the valleys,
under the clefts of the rocks?
Among the smooth stones of the valley is your
portion;
they, they, are your lot;
to them you have poured out a drink offering,
you have brought a grain offering.
Shall I relent for these things?

Righteous removed and rewarded

Futile lives of idol worshippers

12 Day after day these ungodly leaders seek personal satisfaction. They see nothing as wrong so there is no need to repent or warn any one of the beast that are coming to devour them.

1 & 2 Serve as an interjection between the preceding section on ungodly leaders and what will follow about leaders who take others astray. It is incredible that righteous men die. Here Isaiah says that no one notices. It is as if they just disappear. Great men of God pass and there is hardly a mention of them or their lives. When the righteous die they are moving from "celebrity" of this world to the peace of Heaven. This is seen as moving from a world of turmoil to a place of rest. The implication is that as each righteous believer dies no one notices and no one takes their place. He passes over to peace & leaves the clamor behind.

3 Here are those who remain when the righteous are removed. They are involved in both religious and physical sins. Here God calls them to come before Him as He prepares to ask them questions.

4 He wants to know if they have any idea who it is they are mocking with their lives, worship, and religious beliefs? He then confronts them as products of other sinners. Their very existence is based on breaking God's laws.

5 This is a reference to Canaanite worship among the Oaks. (Isa. 1:29; 6:3 (cf Deut 12:2; Jer. 2:20; 3:6; Ezek 6:13; 1K 14:23) This included sexual interaction as part of the idol worship. They sacrificed their children to Baal or to Molech. These practices were forbidden by God. (Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:31; Mic. 6:7, etc)

6 The opening line may refer to some worship practice but it is not clear what is being referenced here. It does involve making a drink offering to the idols and false Gods. God wants to know if they think these offerings to other Gods will appease Him? Do they expect Him to also accept these offerings?

Futile lives of idol worshippers

open sexual perversion

7 On a high and lofty mountain
 you have set your bed,
 and there you went up to offer sacrifice.

8 Behind the door and the doorpost
 you have set up your memorial;
 for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed,
 you have gone up to it,
 you have made it wide;
 and you have made a covenant for yourself with
 them,
 you have loved their bed,
 you have looked on nakedness.

9 You journeyed to the king with oil
 and multiplied your perfumes;
 you sent your envoys far off,
 and sent down even to Sheol.

10 You were wearied with the length of your way,
 but you did not say, "It is hopeless";
 you found new life for your strength,
 and so you were not faint.

11 Whom did you dread and fear,
 so that you lied,
 and did not remember me,
 did not lay it to heart?
 Have I not held my peace, even for a long time,
 and you do not fear me?

12 I will declare your righteousness and your
 deeds,
 but they will not profit you.

⑦ The mountain top picture is of going to a high place to be closer to the Gods to worship. The reference to the bed is in reference to the openness of their sexuality linked with sacrifice to idols & Gods.

⑧ Here at the entrance to their homes they have set up memorials to their false gods. Their idolatry is shown with open sexual perversion. Here sex is open and shared. Both by deserting the dignity and sanctity of marriage and by making it a public display. Here sin is now public pleasure to be shared and displayed.

⑨ They have gone to other kings and nations w/ gifts seeking their favor and protection. They have sought treaties and alliances w/ others. God says they would make a deal w/ the devil in hell. They would seek the help of the dead. All of these actions are strongly forbidden by God and His Holy word.

⑩ They spend all their energy in all they do. Their seeking pleasure, their seeking false alliances, and their worship of false gods. They were so dedicated to doing wrong they could not see that it was hopeless. Just the opposite they found strength in their pursuit of doing evil. Their hope was in their activity not in any tangible results.

⑪ The question is also an indictment of their actions and intentions. What men or gods have made them so afraid that they have deserted God and sought help and protection from men and idols? God wants to know if He has lost His place or if He has become so weak He is no longer to be feared and respected. He taunts them and wants to know how long He has been God and the one in charge of Heaven and earth after creating it all.

⑫ Here God again mocks them. They have no righteousness that would be acceptable to God. Their works and actions show how they have deserted Him and trusted others. Everything they have done to protect themselves will fail. Here God is exposing their sinfulness and how hopeless their situation really is.

Fragile lives of
IDOL WORSHIPPERS

- 13 When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you!
The wind will carry them all off,
a breath will take them away.
But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land
and shall inherit my holy mountain.

Comfort for the Contrite

God Cares for the Righteous

- 14 And it shall be said,
"Build up, build up, prepare the way,
remove every obstruction from my people's way."
15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
"I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly
spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite."
16 For I will not contend forever,
nor will I always be angry;
for the spirit would grow faint before me,
and the breath of life that I made.
17 Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry,
I struck him; I hid my face and was angry,
but he went on backsliding in the way of his
own heart.
18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
I will lead him and restore comfort to him and
his mourners,
19 creating the fruit of the lips.

13 When they come under attack God tells them not to call on Him. They have trusted in idols. Now, let the idols deliver them. These lifeless idols that the wind can blow over. They cannot defend themselves will not be able to help the people who made them. The verse ends with the reminder that if they had trusted and worshipped the true God none of this would have happened. They choose the wrong God and it is going to cost them dearly. This final reminder of the promises of God is placed here to contrast their sinful lives.

- 14 Here following the description of an unfaithful people is the vision of a people who love and serve God. God will prepare for His people a way w/out obstacles. Much like Isa. 40:3-5 He will reward those that trust in Him and do not turn to men or idols for help. Young (p.410) in seeing cannot be limited to the return from Babylon. This is an "eschatological return when God will gather together all His people that are dispersed (because of sin)."
- 15 Here is a promise of the living God dwelling w/in His people. This Holy Spirit of God that Jesus also promised places this part of the prophecy with the church. God's promise is to reach down and live with the humble and righteous.
- 16 IF God remains angry then there is no hope for anyone. Nothing can survive w/out God, and men w/out God would destroy everything, especially themselves.
- 17 God explains it is man's sinfulness that causes His anger. His anger has the purpose to punish but much more to restore to fellowship His people. God turns away because it hurts Him to look on His creation living in such a sinful way.
- 18 God plans to restore and to heal both Jew and gentile who will respond. Leading also implies that some are willing to follow and be restored. Here is a loving God who ultimately finds a way to reach out to help the most hideous sinner who will respond to His call.
- 19 God plans to change to conversation and restore the praise and worship to the lips (hearts) of those who come or return to Him.

God cares for the Righteous
Warning to the wicked

Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD,
"and I will heal him.

20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea;
for it cannot be quiet,
and its waters toss up mire and dirt.

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

True and False Fasting

58 "Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

2 Yet they seek me daily
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the judgment of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they delight to draw near to God.

3 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take
no knowledge of it?'
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own
pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.

4 Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.

5 Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?

Fasting

19 God declares the offer is available to everyone no matter where they are (far or near). His healing is both spiritual and physical. Here is a promise to those who respond to his leading.

20-21 Here the section is concluded w/a warning. The promises of God are not intended for the wicked. They will live lives of turmoil, tossed about w/out a foundation. Even as the righteous are blessed w/ God's peace the wicked live in fear always under attack.

1 God tells Isaiah to declare in a loud voice their sins and transgressions. Here He calls them Jacob the deceiver. The prophet is not to hold back as he preached the message he has received from God.

2 Here we see why God is so upset w/ them. They want the benefits of knowing God but do not live as the people of God. Here their worship is for selfish reasons. They are acting, believing God does not see anything beyond what they want Him to see. There empty worship is offered hoping to gain insight & favor w/out service or righteousness.

3 The people want to know why they fast if God will not answer them. God responds that their fasting is mixed w/ their seeking pleasure. The people think their acts and actions are enough to please God. God responds that He sees everything they do, not just the fasting that they hope impresses God.

4 They are merely doing a religious exercise to somehow earn God's favor, but their lives are unchanged. Their evil lifestyle is in no way changed by their "self-righteous" worship. God is clear that such a lifestyle stops God from even hearing them. Their hypocrisy stops God's mercy and grace from being given to them. God is not opposed to fasting. It is just theirs is not real fasting and will in no way impact God.

5a When God looks to earth the fast He expects is very different than what they are doing. Such a fast starts w/a humble and contrite heart. It is a time of submission and a return to worship to seek God's will. It is a time to seek God, not a time to demand or even expect anything beyond the Holy presence of God examining your life.