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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 57.

(2015)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man. As to such I neither claim special knowledge or perfect understanding.

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Isaiah 57.

Topics.

- The righteous perish and enter into peace and rest in their beds.
- Children of transgression, the offspring of deceit, who slaughter children.
- You have made a covenant and loved their bed and looked on nakedness.
- You sent your envoys with perfumes to the king and sent down to Sheol.
- Those who take refuge in God will inherit my holy mountain.
- The one who inhabits eternity, who is holy dwells with the lowly of spirit.
- He continued backsliding in the way of his own heart, but I will heal him.
- The Commonwealth of Israel.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth.

Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22). The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

This chapter is set out in the following three sections: -

1. The blessing of the righteous upon death.
 2. The wickedness of Israel.
 3. The healing of Israel.
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The Blessing of the Righteous

The Righteous Perish and Enter into Peace and Rest in their Beds.

Isaiah 57:1-2 ----- ¹The 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; ²he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness.

These words of Isaiah are most comforting, yet often overlooked the death of the righteous is from God's heavenly and eternal view a deliverance from the calamity, trouble, grief and sorrow that this world brings and an entering into peace and rest.

The righteous die and enter into peace and are at rest in their beds: (v2) when a person who belongs to Christ dies, the Bible says, that they have no knowledge and know nothing, they are totally unaware of it and are therefore in a perfect state of peace, this state is called sleeping in Christ and because they have no consciousness there, is no time. It is very similar to someone in a deep sleep there is no awareness of time, when the person wakes they have no idea of whether four, seven or twelve hours have passed.

Likewise because there is no time in death the moment a Christian dies is the moment they are in the eternal Kingdom of God and with the LORD, for them it is instant, even though many years may have passed by in our world's time. David died thousands of years ago, but the moment he is resurrected will be like the moment he breathed his last breath, because for him there is no awareness of time, so it is for every Christian from death to Christ is instant.

Death to the Christian is similar to a person in a coma: a person in a coma has no consciousness of time, time does not exist to them, when they wake, they often think only a day or so has gone by, when in actual fact several years may have passed yet they think they are waking up, the same day, or next day after they went to sleep. The person in the coma or in death is totally unaware of any time that they have spent in the coma or being dead.

Death to those who belong to Christ is much the same as the person in the coma, the dead or those who are sleeping in Christ have absolutely no consciousness of time so for them, the moment they die, is the moment they are instantly with the Lord, even though many years may have passed during the time they have been dead (i.e., sleeping in Christ).

It is the same principal as a person who goes into hospital for an operation: the patient is given an anaesthetic and put to sleep, surgeons cut them open and remove infected body parts over the next few hours, yet the patient is totally unaware of it they wake up and have absolutely no idea of the time that has passed, therefore when Paul says: -

- We would rather be away (absent in the KJV) from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).

It is a true statement, even though he may have spent years sleeping in Christ.

NOTE: a second reason a Christians death is called sleeping in Christ is because their death is only temporary, being asleep in Christ means everyone who dies in Christ is kept in the eternal mind and memory of God.

Jesus said: -

- Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them falls to the ground without the father knowing it and even the hairs of our head are all numbered therefore we should not fear death because we are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31).

The entire person, (i.e., body, spirit, mind and consciousness) remains sleeping in Christ, until the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) when all who are asleep in the Lord are woken up at the blast of the angels trumpet and raised from the dead to everlasting glory and clothed with an eternal and immortal body.

NOTE: some people find it difficult to comprehend God raising the dead, but think of it this way: we have super computers today that have in their memories literally trillions of bits of information and at the touch of a key any one of those bits is resurrected to us on a brightly coloured screen (in the future it is most likely they will simply appear in the air), then with another touch of the key it all vanishes into the super memory and is gone, until we resurrect it again.

Knowing that God has given his creation a mortal mind and finite memory to be able to build such amazing computers should make it very easy to understand how God keeps us all in His immortal mind and eternal memory waiting for the right time to touch the supernatural keyboard of heaven and raise us once again to life. Added to this very few Christians have any trouble believing God created the universe that we live in so raising the dead in comparison is not such a difficult task for such an awesome, powerful and majestic God (Heb. 11:3).

The righteous are taken away from calamity: (v1) death in the Bible is often personified as a mighty prince with his monarchy being the most absolute, universal and lasting of all. No-one is exempted from death's destructive power and miseries since it survives all other earthly rule, authority, and power and will be the last enemy to be put down (1 Co. 15:26). In the light of this truth eternal life is the greatest gift those made of the dust of the earth can possess. In God's eyes mortal death is not seen as mankind views it (i.e., a final end), but as a birth into a life that by far supersedes any kind of love and joy that we may have experienced in this life.

When the end comes and faith and hope have been tested God's promises that after all our sorrow in this world He will not only raise the faithful in Christ to eternal life and everlasting happiness, but will also wipe away every tear of sorrow and make all things new.

- The Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Rev. 7:17).

- God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (Rev. 21:4).

Consider for a moment: if our world's top scientist and medical practitioners could invent a pill that would give people eternal life the billionaires of this world would write out a cheque no-matter what the cost to buy them for all their family and friends, and almost all the world would sell everything they had to purchase one.

This is the high value Peter, the apostles and Paul placed on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the apostles, Paul and Peter there was nothing in this world more valuable for any man or woman to possess than the gift of eternal life.

How sad it is that in some modern churches today this high value of eternal life has been lost and replaced by a Gospel that focuses on a blessed, prosperous and successful life now in this mortal and corrupt world and messages that appeal to self, ego and pride. Especially when one considers what it cost God the eternal Father and the high price His Son paid to purchase this gift of eternal life for all who would humbly accept by faith the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A man wisely said, "I have never seen a Hurst transporting the coffin of a corpse with a trailer attached and full of the deceased person's material possessions." I myself live in a downstairs unit. When the man above me died, a tip truck was backed up to the balcony of his upstairs unit and all the possessions were thrown into the tray of the truck most of the items smashing into little pieces as they hit the steel floor of the tray. These broken and worthless pieces were then taken to the smelly fires of the rubbish dump. These two simple examples clearly show the vanity of labouring and building our entire life solely on the temporary riches and things of this world and giving no thought or time to God.

NOTE: this does not mean it is wrong for Christians to be rich and wealthy, there are many men and women who have been very successful in their particular line of work, they do all their business deals honestly and with integrity and treat their staff justly and because of their success they have resources that are able to help others extend the Kingdom of God and help the poor.

It is when those who have riches give God no place in their heart, mind and thoughts and instead build their life upon their success, upon what they achieve and upon what they possess and put all their trust in their riches and wealth and use it for their own selfish indulgences that money is destructive in that it robs those who make it their god, from eternal life. Money is not sinful or evil it can be used for good or for bad, to help the poor or to corrupt a king. It is the purpose it is used for that determines whether the money is good or bad, not the money itself.

The Wickedness of Israel

Children of Transgression, the Offspring of Deceit, who Slaughter Children.

Isaiah 57:3-6 -----³But you, draw near, sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman.
⁴Whom 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, ⁵you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree, who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? ⁶Among 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?

In the previous two verses Isaiah's focus was upon the righteous entering into peace and rest upon their death, now his focus is set upon God's disdain for the unrighteous of Israel.

Draw near: (v3) the focus here is upon the unrepentant shameless and unbelieving people amongst the nation of Israel that despised the prophets and the righteous and believed themselves to be safe from danger to come near (to Isaiah

the prophet) and hear what the LORD has to say against their character and behaviour. Isaiah's purpose is to set before them the greatness of their sin and the certainty that they would bring God's judgment upon themselves. It is a call to the wicked hypocrites, who under the pretence of the name of God's people, mocked God's word and His promises: boasting openly that they were the children of Abraham, but because they were not faithful and obedient as Abraham was, the LORD calls them children of an adulterous woman who sought protection and comfort by wicked means rather than look to God.

Sons of the sorceress: (v3) the word sorceress comes from the Hebrew word (*ʿanan*) it literally means to cover or cloud over. Figuratively it carries the idea of acting covertly. It embraces those who practise magic; those who observe times (i.e., an enchanter) and those who prophecy out of their own mind and tell people what they want to hear (i.e., a soothsayer). The expression, "the sons of the sorceress," may apply to the following two things.

1. The women of Israel who wore veils and magic bands on their arms and not only spoke false visions and practiced divination, but also prophesied lies out of their own minds and by their false visions and prophecies disheartened the people of Israel and lead them astray. (Ezek. 13:17-23).
 2. To those who are addicted to sorcery and enchantments; who consult the oracles of pagan gods rather than the only true God.
- For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortunetellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. (Isaiah 2:6).

Like other inhabitants of the East, the people of Israel were very much addicted to these things particularly in the time of Manasseh the evil king of Judah.

- He burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He (Manasseh) did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. (2 Kings 21:6).

They were so devoted to hearing from mediums and from wizards that it would be right and proper to call them, "the sons of the sorceress," as if a sorceress had been their mother, and they had grown up to walk in her steps, and to imitate her example.

Offspring of the adulterer: (v3) refers to spiritual adultery which is idolatry and worship of other gods. In the context of these verses it does not refer to the genuine children of Abraham, but to those who pretend and boast that they are of the seed of Abraham. The sense is that they were birthed in fornication by a common whore; which is not to be understood literally, but figuratively, because their actions, practises and behaviour were far more suitable to children of adultery than to the true seed of Abraham, especially during the wicked and corrupt reign of Manasseh the evil king of Judah (2 Kings 21).

Israel as a nation had fixed their affections on other objects rather than upon God, and loved the images of idol-worship more than they did their Creator. They debased themselves by their disgraceful worship of idols and their unholy passions. By their zeal in worshipping foreign gods and their indifference to the shame they brought upon the true God, they brought God's judgment upon themselves. Those who forsake the only right way have a thousand wrong paths to wander in and whoever sets up anything instead of God, for their hope and confidence will never come to a right end.

Against whom do you stick out your tongue? (v4) this carries the idea that the people of Israel should consider who it is that they are mocking and scoffing when they show such disdain and disrespect to God's prophets because it is not only the prophets that they are insulting, but also God who sent them and whose word and cause they plead and in whose name they speak. Whenever a person speaks against the faithful of God or does anything to harm them it is the same as doing it against God Himself. Likewise whenever anyone does a good deed toward God's people it is the same as doing good to God Himself.

Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit: (v4) means that they are a generation of liars who deal deceitfully both with God and man and whose practices contradict their confessions? The offspring of deceit refers to Jacob (the father of Israel) who lied and deceived his father Isaac to cheat Esau from his birthright. From Jacob came the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel. The expression, "the children of transgression the offspring of deceit," refers to the following Scriptures: -

- Jacob went in to his father Isaac and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." ²⁰But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." ²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." ²²So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. (Gen. 27:18-23).
- Isaac said to Esau, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." ³⁶Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." (Gen. 27:35-36).

The story of Jacob's lies and deception: when Isaac was about to die he told his son Esau to go and hunt game and prepare a meal and he will bless him, but while Esau is out hunting the game, Rebekah tells Jacob to pretend he is Esau so he gets the blessing of the firstborn instead of his older brother. Jacob grabs two goats from outside and Rebekah prepares them and puts the best garments of Esau on Jacob so that Isaac in his old age and nearly blind will think Jacob is Esau (Gen. 27:1-17). The following verses show that both Isaac and Esau called Jacob a deceiver and cheat.

- Isaac said, to Esau "Your brother Jacob came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." ³⁶Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." (Gen. 27:35-36).

Against God's will Israel not only mixed with women of the surrounding nations who worshipped idols and pagan gods, but also brought forth offspring from them and because of this they turned away from God and adopted the wicked religious practices of the woman they married, including child sacrifices; in doing this God is saying that it is the same as if they were poking their tongues out at God and mocking Him.

You who slaughter your children in the valleys: (v5) this is almost unbelievable God's chosen people are offering their children to pagan gods. The name of one of these gods was Molech (Moloch) also called Milcom it was the national idol and deity of the Ammonites. The statue of Molech stood in the valley of (the son of) Hinnom (the Hebrew word for Gehenna) which was a valley of Jerusalem. It was so tall that he appeared as if he were staring down from a throne of brass.

Fire in the pit beneath the hollow statue would blaze with a loud roar, tongues of flame would reach up and lick around the edges of Molech's open mouth and a column of smoke would billow high into the air and be seen from some distance. The arms of Molech reached upward and out as if waiting to be filled they formed a steep incline that ended in Molech's open mouth

Priests would bring a child to be sacrificed to Molech and chant, Molech, Molech, Molech and the frenzied crowd would also chant Molech, Molech, Molech to the throbbing beat of drums. While the priests and the crowd chanted to the pounding rhythm of drums, the chief priest faced Molech with his arms raised, pleading with the god in a frenzied cry, when the chief priest finished his prayer, he would lower his arms and lift the child sacrifice in the air

The chief priest would then toss the child into the monsters waiting arms the child would roll down the hot and smoothly polished arms and into Molech's open mouth and the roaring fire and flames would devour the sacrificial child. In the New Testament Gehenna the Valley of Hinnon where the statute of Molech stood became a very appropriate symbol for the horror and total destruction of the human body, soul and spirit.

How God must have wept as His heart was torn in grief as He looked down on His people doing such cruel and horrific things to the LORD'S children, especially when it is considered that there is no other nation on earth that has history with their God as Israel does. Their history with the LORD their God goes back to the beginning of time no other nation or religion can claim such miracles and wonders or history no matter what god they may believe in. The following verses show that the United Kingdom of Israel has always been God's special and unique nation unlike any other nation. God said: -

- Israel was his son who he called out of Egypt and he loved them when they were a child (Hosea 11:1).
- He gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age. (Isaiah 46:3-4).
- Israel is his allotted heritage (Deut. 32:9) and the apple of his eye (Deut. 32:10).
- Israel is a people holy to him (Deut. 7:6) and his treasured possession (Deut. 14:2).

The LORD has not spoken this way with any other nation, but God has not only spoken of Israel differently, but always dealt with them differently to any other nation: -

- To Israel God gave the Ten Commandments and showed his great power. (Exodus 20:1-17).
- To Israel God declared his word, statutes and his rules. (Rom. 9:4)
- To Israel God gave the prophets, the worship and the promises. (Rom. 3:4)
- To Israel belonged the covenant, the adoption, the patriarchs and the glory. (Rom. 3:5)
- To Israel the oracles of God were entrusted. (Rom. 3:2)
- The people of Israel are the offspring of Abraham the father of faith. (Rom. 9:7)
- From Israel's race came the Christ the Saviour of the world. (Rom. 9:5)
- God declared his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation (Psalm 147:19-20).

The LORD has not given any other nations such great privileges. These are the many reasons the Jews (especially the religious leaders of Jesus generation) considered themselves to be the holy race with God and the Gentile nations to be the unclean race without God.

The thermometer of God's prophecy: it is true that Israel has been and still is a special nation to God, but since Christ death and resurrection salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless Israel remains a clear sign of where we are in prophecy concerning Christ's return. It could be said that they are the thermometer of God's prophecy much like the mercury on a natural thermometer measures the heat of the day and moves up the vertical red line warning us of impending danger when the heat of the sun is reaching temperatures that are dangerous for the good health of the skin and our well-being.

Likewise Israel can be seen as the mercury of Bible prophecy in the sense that world events that come upon the nation of Israel (especially Jerusalem) are signs that give us some insight as to how close we are to that glorious breathtaking and world changing day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory.

But God's focus during our present age for eternal salvation is upon creating a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is also called a new creation in Christ, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the church and the Kingdom of God.

Israel's love for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob cannot be doubted. When their Messiah does return in glory and the LORD pours upon them a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy when they look on him whom they had pierced, not only will the entire nation weep over the horrific crime they committed against him (Zech. 12:9-14), but the entire world and its oppressive systems of global finance and trade will be changed forever and its corrupt governments will be replaced for the better.

For further information concerning the new nation God is building in Christ, see the title:

- The Commonwealth of Israel, at the end of this chapter.

Shall I relent for these things? (v6) here God is saying to Israel, "Considering your sorcery, adulteries, idol worship and your slaughtering of your children do you think I should relent of the judgment that has come upon you." The things to relent of would most likely embrace the following three things: -

1. The many Assyrian invasions upon the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria.
2. Babylon's invasion of the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem.
3. Israel being under the authority and oppression of the Empire of Babylon for seventy years.

You have Made a Covenant and Loved their Bed and Looked on Nakedness.

Isaiah 57:7-8 ----- ⁷On a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifice. ⁸Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial; for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed (hast discovered thyself to another than me in KJV), you have gone up to it, you have made it wide (thou hast enlarged thy bed in KJV), and you have made a covenant for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have looked on nakedness.

High and lofty mountain: (v7) refers to the many pagan altars Israel had erected throughout their land under the shade of trees on various mountains whereby they would go up to offer sacrifices and worship foreign gods.

Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial: (v8) with these words Isaiah is pointing to the fact that the people of Israel had written behind their doors some idolatrous symbol or inscription concerning their foreign gods instead of writing the words of the LORD and their creed, "the LORD our God, the LORD is one," as the following verses show that they were commanded to do.

- You shall write them (the words the LORD our God, the LORD is one) on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:9).
- You shall write them (the words of the LORD) on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 11:20).

These verses show that Israel was expressly directed to write the laws of God on the posts of the house as a memorial. The purpose for this was that God's word would be forever before them and their children would learn from generation to generation. The following verse shows that a curse was pronounced against those who made a graven or molten image and put it in a secret place: -

- Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret. And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.' (Deut. 27:15).

Israel had filled their houses with memorials of idol-worship or images of domestic or foreign gods in which such memorials should have no part in their dwellings. Instead of setting up the word of God in the open places on the posts and doors to have it in remembrance (Deut. 6:9) Israel had set up signs and marks of their idolatry in their homes and in every other place.

You have uncovered your bed: (v8) (hast discovered thyself to another than me in KJV) the language here is s taken from adulterous intercourse and is designed to show the love which they had for idolatrous worship and the extent of their unfaithfulness to God.

You have made it wide: (v8)) (thou hast enlarged thy bed in KJV) so as to receive more paramours (i.e., other lovers that they were having an improper sexual relationship with and other gods that they were having a secret spiritual idolatrous relationship with). It carries the idea that they multiplied their idols and altars to increase their idolatry more and more in the land and receive many adulterers together.

They made a covenant with them: (v8) the sense here is that they had made or entered into some form of agreement with idolaters to serve them and expect help from them this they often did during times of war. Rather than look to God and trust in Him they not only sought the help of stronger nations, but also paid them with silver and gold or entered into a covenant to pay them taxes to defend and protect them.

You have loved their bed: (v8) means, that they had delighted in the temples, altars, groves, and sacrifices of idolatry, and had provided a place for them in their own land.

You have looked on nakedness,” (v8) means they prostituted their body (as the expression commonly signifies) to others besides the LORD their husband. It implies the ultimate intimacy of a relationship. The most intimate act of a man and woman who care for each other is to climb naked into the same bed together. God is likening Israel's relationship to other gods to this same intimacy.

The LORD is saying, Israel has gone into a room closed the door, pulled back the bed sheets and climbed in the bed with other gods. This is what it means to commit spiritual adultery against the LORD.

Israel was called to have this kind of intimacy with the LORD their God only, just as in any human marriage the intimacy of the heart is not to be shared with another lover. This was how the relationship between Israel and God was meant to be, but Israel wanted other lovers.

You sent Your Envoys with Perfumes to the King and Sent down to Sheol.

Isaiah 57:9-12 ----- ⁹You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far off, and sent down even to Sheol (did debase thyself even unto hell in the KJV). ¹⁰You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless"; you found new life for your strength (thou hast found the life of thine hand in KJV), and so you were not faint (thou wast not grieved in KJV), ¹¹Whom 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? ¹²I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you.

You journeyed to the king: (v9) Isaiah now passes from Israel's idolatry to another great sin, which was to place which was their confidence in heathen kings. The word king in this context may be taken collectively for the kings of Assyria during the days of Isaiah whose religion Judah had shamefully adopted and who they did seek help and sent them presents and gifts.

The king of Egypt who the Israelites were very prone to seek help from and send presents to and to kings of Babylon or any other foreign king they relied on to protect and defend them instead of trusting God. The essential idea is that they had proved unfaithful to the LORD their God, by placing their trust in foreign kings.

You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes: (v9) the idea presented here is that of a wife being unfaithful to her husband, who had bathed and perfumed herself and painted her eyes, and adorned herself with ornaments for the purpose of alluring other lovers to her. Like an unfaithful wife the Jews had forsaken God their Husband and had prepared precious ointments, perfumes and gifts in order to court the friendship of foreign kings and gain their favour and procure their aid.

You sent your envoys far off: (v9) not merely to neighbouring nations, but to distant nations for the purpose of seeking their aid and securing an alliance with them.

You sent down even to Sheol (did debase thyself even unto hell in the KJV): (v9) the idea is that in forsaking the LORD their God to make covenants with foreign nations and seek their help they had sunk to the lowest possible debasement of character and condition. To court the friendship of mortal earthly kings was utter foolishness when Israel had the Almighty eternal God for their protector.

NOTE: based upon the words, "You debased thyself even unto hell," (v10) (in the KJV) and others verses similar to it many worldwide believe in the traditional religious teaching that the dead go to a place of torture and extreme suffering and pain called hell, but consider the following verses concerning death: -

- Why did I (Job) not die at birth, for then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept and been at rest. There the wicked cease from troubling, the weary are at rest and the prisoners are at ease together. The small and the great are there and the slave is free from his master. (Job 3:11-19).
- For God sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. ¹¹Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names. (Psalm 49:10-11).
- Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. ¹³This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. *Selah* (Psalm 49:12-13).
- What happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. ²⁰All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. (Eccles. 3:19-20).

Their graves are their homes forever (Psalm 49:11) is the true teaching of the Bible, those who are judged unworthy of eternal life do not go to a place of fiery flames called hell where they are cruelly and brutally tortured by evil eternal creatures called demons and their bodies burned by fiery flames so that they suffer the worst of all agonies for all eternity. This age old traditional doctrine is not only a gross misunderstanding of Scripture, but is also a gross misrepresentation of God's character, since it portrays Him as an extremely sadistic God, especially when it is considered that even those in the secular world would not inflict such brutal and cruel torture on a human for their entire life let alone for all eternity. Added to this John tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8) (1 John 4:16).

This horrific doctrine of hell was most likely perpetuated in the early years of the church by religious leaders to scare the naïve into the church and has been adopted and perpetuated by their followers (without question) from generation to generation through tradition and religious institutions and organisations. Eternal life or eternal death (i.e., utter and total extinction) is the only two choices the Bible teaches from Genesis to Revelation. For further information see the titles: -

- Hell or the Grave (Final destination of Humans).
- The Lake of Fire.
- Both titles are in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

You were wearied with the length of your way: (v10) carries the idea that instead of securing their nation and procuring foreign aid and thereby bringing relief and comfort to themselves, they had by their laborious endeavours and long journeys to distant nations achieved nothing of any worth and tired themselves in the process.

You did not say, "It is hopeless": (v10) Israel would not acknowledge that their negotiations were fruitless and that there was no success or prosperous result. They did not perceive that their labour was lost and that their circumstances did not change for the better, but were placed into even greater and more desperate situations by their covenants and alliances to foreign nations. Under all their discouragements and disappointments, they did not perceive that their labour was fruitless, and that their situations were not healed, but made worse by their sinful alliances.

Though they failed in one place or with one nation they sought out another, instead of saying, "It is hopeless or it is vain," and return to the LORD their God and seek His aid, they continued to seek human alliances, supposing they would find the assistance and help they sought from men made of clay rather than humbling themselves and trusting in the Almighty Eternal God.

Chasing happiness: this principal is a striking illustration of the conduct of people in seeking happiness away from God. They wander from object to object; they become weary in the pursuit, yet they do not abandon it. They continue to cling to hope even though the world gives them no permanent comfort. Though wealth, ambition, gaiety, and vice all fail in imparting the lasting happiness which they seek, they do not give them up in despair.

They still feel that it is to be found in some other way than returning to God. They wander from object to object, and travel from land to land in their quest to find lasting happiness, but never come to an end. This is because worldly pleasures travel and such like things do fulfil for a time and because of this they never perceive that what they are chasing only brings joy for a moment and therefore are caught in the cycle of going from one worldly thing to another rather than say, "there is no hope it is an endless cycle, we give up and will now seek happiness in God."

You found new life for your strength: (v10) (thou hast found the life of thine hand in KJV) the hand is the instrument by which we bring about our ambitions, goals and purposes. However the expression, "by the life of the hand," in this context does not just refer to the hand, but embraces all that Israel gave their full effort to.

They had found new life (i.e. falsely imagined) that they had found life and strength by their wicked and rebellious practices and by their covenants and alliances with foreign nations. They acquired an increase of strength and renewed power in the alliance they were seeking and therefore did not repent of their ungodly practises and diplomacy and return to God. They relied on their own plans and the aid of foreign powers which kept them from absolute despair, and from feeling their need of the assistance of God.

You were not faint: (v10) (thou wast not grieved in KJV) this statement could refer to the following two things: -

1. By their ungodly foreign alliances they believed they had obtained enough aid to strengthen and defend them.
2. By their trust in foreign gods and the deceptive gratification experienced in the service of idols they had not been brought to utter despair.

Because of their trust in their alliances and foreign gods they persisted in their foolish and wicked ways rather than humble themselves, repent and turn to the LORD their God.

Chasing pleasure: the passage teaches the general truth that despite the trials and disappointments of life sinners are not utterly overwhelmed in despair, but are still able to find, "the life of their hand in them," if a plan fails, they repeat it or try

another. Despite all the expense, frustration and disappointment in the pursuits of ambition, wealth, fame and fashion they find enough pleasure to sustain them and enough success to keep them from turning to God.

It is this imperfect and temporary pleasure and success that the world gives amongst all its disappointments, and the hope of permanent joy and greater success and prosperity that sustains the children of Adam in their pursuit for worldly things rather than seeking happiness and contentment in God.

However when their world becomes all gloom and disappointment there is often felt the necessity of something better and the mind is turned to God, or when the mind becomes convinced that all the joys which the world promises are lacking then the eternal friendship of God and His blessings of salvation are sought with a full heart.

Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me? (v11) because the LORD did not judge Israel's wickedness immediately they did not fear Him, even worse than this they forgot Him, what a tragedy, if they had simply remained faithful God would have blessed the nation beyond measure.

The beauty of God: (a personal thought) the following verses show that both God and Moses knew that Israel was a stubborn and rebellious people and that when Moses died they would forsake the LORD their God.

- The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. (Deut. 31:15-16).

Then prior to Israel crossing over the River Jordan into the land of Canaan Moses said to them: -

- I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death!
²⁸Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them. ²⁹For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands." (Deut. 31:27-29).

It appears to me that God deliberately chose Israel to show all those made of clay the greatness of His love and compassion. Every time Israel humbled themselves and returned to the LORD in honest heartfelt repentance He always accepted them with open arms and abundantly forgave all their rebellion (and there were many). Each time Israel returned, God began with them afresh as though they had never turned away.

God does not forget, but neither does He hold resentment or bitterness in His heart they are foreign entities to Him. God not only chooses to take Israel's past rebellion and cast it into the darkness of the bottom of the ocean and fill His mind afresh toward them, but also grants them a new and fresh beginning. This same principal applies to all who return to the LORD in honest heartfelt repentance.

I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you: (v12) the reason Israel's righteous deeds will not profit them is because even though they may have been strictly adhering to their ceremonial rites, sacrifices and holy days and keeping their religious customs and traditions not only was their heart not involved and their behaviour corrupt, but and they had also established many altars of worship to foreign gods throughout their cities and their land.

It is very much like a person clothing themselves in religious garments, going to church every Sunday and doing all the outward religious things, but on every other day never giving God a second thought, but living as they please regardless of how their behaviour reflects on the honour of God and the good name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It matters not how perfectly these hypocritical believers perform their outward religious deeds on Sunday they will all count for nothing at the judgment seat of God.

The Healing of Israel

Those who Take Refuge in God will inherit My Holy Mountain.

Isaiah 57:13-14 ----- ¹³When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The wind will carry them off, a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain. ¹⁴And it shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way."

Here God is challenging those who worship foreign gods to let their idols deliver them from their enemies. The statement, "the wind will carry them off, a breath will take them away," literally happened during the following two historic events: -

1. When Shalmaneser the king of Assyria overthrew the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria and took the people of Israel captive (i.e., carried them off).
2. When Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon invaded the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem and not only took away from their land all the silver and gold, but also took all the inhabitants of Jerusalem captive (i.e., carried them off).

In contrast to idols and those who trust in them being carried away by the wind (a symbol of nations and armies) the faithful who trust in God will inherit His holy mountain.

Build up, build up; prepare the way remove every obstruction from my people's way: (v14) this statement reaches forward to Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) who God not only used as His anointed shepherd and called him by name, but also said He would equip Cyrus and take him by the right hand and go before him to bring the Empire of Babylon to ruin and set the people of Israel free from their seventy year bondage under the rule and authority of the Empire of Babylon.

The following verses of the prophet Isaiah speak of God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations.

- The LORD says of Cyrus, "*He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfil all my purpose,*" saying of Jerusalem, "*She shall be built,*" and of the temple, "*Your foundation shall be laid.*" (Isaiah 44:28).
- Thus says the LORD to *his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped*, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1).
- *I (the LORD) will go before you (Cyrus king of Persia) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron,* ³*I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you (Cyrus) by your name.* ⁴*For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me.* (Isaiah 45:2-3).
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me,* ⁶*that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other.* (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus) and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: 'Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.'*" (Isaiah 45:14).

God used Cyrus King of Persia as His anointed shepherd to set His people free. Cyrus after conquering the mighty Empire of Babylon gave Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God.

He who takes refuge in me shall inherit my holy mountain: (v13) refers to the following historical event and to a future event yet to happen: -

1. The historical event: refers to Israel's return from their seventy year Babylonian captivity. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to Mount Zion and their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed.

The return to Zion is believed by some to be the first time in human history where a people exiled from their homeland by the force of a foreign ruler had returned to their native soil to re-establish their own joint national home and thereby further encourage the concept of a distinct national identity for the Jewish people.

2. The future event yet to happen: refers to the Lord Jesus Christ's return in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign.

The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in this first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth.

Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce (Isaiah 65:17-25). All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states: -

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

The great prophet Isaiah wrote: -

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

It should be noted: that as glorious as Christ's millennial reign will be it is not the final stage of God's eternal plan for mankind's salvation that he planned and purposed in His eternal mind before the world began. At the end of Christ's millennial reign God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead.

They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its eternal perfect fullness and majestic royal glory.

The One who Inhabits Eternity, who is Holy Dwells with the Lowly of Spirit.

Isaiah 57:15 ----- ¹⁵For 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 (humble in KJV) and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Isaiah exalts and magnifies the name of the LORD and then says the most beautiful thing, the LORD dwells with those who have a contrite (i.e., repentant) humble and lowly spirit and revives their spirit and heart. This means the keys to God's kingdom are not nobility, riches, a high IQ, strict church attendance, having knowledge of the Bible from beginning to end, but a right attitude which is a repentant heart and a humble and lowly spirit which means everyone no matter what their station in life is has what they need within themselves to enter the Kingdom of God.

God's Holy Mountain: refers to mount Zion, it comes from the Hebrew word (*Tsiyown*) and refers to the mountain the city of Jerusalem is built upon. It carries the idea of a permanent capital mountain of Jerusalem in the sense that it is readily seen and easily visible and noticed as an important sign (i.e., a significant and historic sign and guiding pillar). It is called God's Holy Mountain because Jerusalem God's Holy City sits on it.

Though Mount Zion is not distinguished for its elevation or grandeur and though it had nothing in itself to claim attention or to excite wonder, it was the most exalted and honoured above all mountains because it was selected as the place where God was to be worshipped and the place where God's city and God's temple is built and God's worship was established.

Even though Mount Sinai had all the awesome glory of the Almighty God descend upon it and the law came from there, Mount Zion excels in excellence over it. This is because from Mount Zion came the Messiah the Christ attended by a multitude of angels celebrating his birth and on Mount Zion the Messiah the Christ came into his own temple as Malachi in the following verse prophesied he would.

- Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 3:1).

Added to all this royal glory, multitudes of angels ministered to the Lord in his temptation, at his resurrection and accompanied him in his ascension all from Mount Zion.

- Mount Sinai is the mountain of the Old Covenant of Law in contrast Mount Zion is the mountain of the New Covenant of Grace.
- Mount Sinai's glory of the law pales when stood before Mount Zion's grace and Christ's death and resurrection upon it.

Neither Mount Sinai nor Mount Zion can glory and boast in themselves for the following reasons. Mount Sinai is not famous or respected as a holy mountain and a mountain of God because of any majesty of itself, but because it was upon this mountain God descended and gave the Ten Commandments. It is this awesome and holy event that exalts Mount Sinai and not the mountain itself.

Likewise Mount Zion has no fame or glory of itself, its glory comes from being the honoured mountain God chose to build His Holy city upon and is the mountain that the Messiah the Christ the Saviour of the world died and rose again from. The real strength is not in Mount Zion itself, but in the LORD who is the head of the thousands of chariots and the heavenly host surrounding it and as such is the protector of his chosen dwelling-place.

Zion is sometimes used as an ancient name for Jerusalem itself and because it is often used in poetic and prophetic passages it can refer to:-

- The hill the city of Jerusalem is built on.
- The city of Jerusalem.
- The temple and by extension Judah and the people of God.

The LORD who inhabits eternity: (v15) God says He dwells in a High and Holy place where there is no beginning and no end meaning God dwells in eternity, but He also says he dwells with everyone who has a sense of guilt and remorse over their sin and that He revives the spirit of those who are lowly. This refers to the following two groups: -

- To those who have been cast out of society; those who have been treated as second class citizens; those who have been so humiliated that they have a low sense of dignity and self-worth; those who are looked on by others as less in value, significance and moral worth and the poor.
- To those who have a humble, reverent, courteous, considerate and respectful attitude and to those who do what is right and treat others with respect and decency.

He continued Backsliding in the Way of His Own Heart, but I will Heal Him.

Isaiah 57:16-21 ----- ¹⁶For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before me, (the spirit should fail before me in KJV) and the breath of life that I made. ¹⁷Because 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. ¹⁸I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, ¹⁹creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD, "and I will heal him. ²⁰But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. ²¹There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

I will not be angry with my people forever, nor always refuse to pardon and comfort them. This is to be regarded as having been primarily addressed to the Jews in their long and painful exile in Babylon. The LORD is saying that He will put an end to the miseries of the Jews and deliver them from their seventy year captivity.

It is a word of comfort to the repentant who is still bearing the chastisement of Israel's sins, God is saying that He will not hide His face (i.e., withhold His favour) from them forever there is an end to their bondage to Babylon. His favour will return to them His chastisements has its limits, if it was not so His chosen nation would be utterly annihilated from the face of the earth.

This principal is not limited to Israel only, but applies to all God's people. When God chastises and afflicts His people, it is because they are taking the wrong path and for their good and not their harm and for His own glory. When His goals are reached He will bring His chastisement to an end.

NOTE.

This principal should not be taken to infer that every faithful believer who is suffering some type of affliction, sorrow and grief is being chastised because of some hidden sin as some teach. Israel's wickedness was clear for all to see and Job who God said was a righteous and blameless man suffered tremendous sorrow and grief.

The spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made: (v16) this carries the idea that God would do nothing that would utterly destroy the works of His own hands. He not only knows that mankind is but a breath of wind, but is also fully aware of the frailty and weakness of the human frame and therefore restrains His hand and renews His grace toward those who return to Him in humble repentance and makes them new creatures and restores them again to Himself.

The spirit should grow faint before me: (v16) (the spirit should fail before me in KJV) if God did continue in anger against His people and withdraw His mercy, forgiveness and grace all mankind would be utterly consumed forever and His purpose for creation would be left bankrupt. But this is not God's intention in regard to His own people rather His chastisements are not for the purpose of their destruction, but that they would come to repentance and turn to Him and be saved.

This is exactly what happened to Israel during their seventy year captivity. God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem.

Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed.

The truth taught here is that those who are God's children are safe. We may suffer much and long so much so that it seems scarcely possible that we would endure but God will not contend for ever with His people, for the human spirit would thereby be utterly crushed and His object is not to crush and destroy, but to chasten and save to eternal life. God delights in steadfast love and does not willingly afflict anyone. He understands that as descendants of our earthly father Adam we have inherited a fallen corrupted mortal body that is infected with sinful dysfunctions and aberrations and therefore He does not deal with us according to our iniquities, but with compassion, mercy and grace. The following verses shine a spotlight upon these truths: -

- The LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. (Gen. 8:21).
- The LORD will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. (Psalm 103:9-10).

God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities, because He is always conscious that we are mortal creatures and the intention of the human heart tends toward wrongdoing from our youth.

- Yet the LORD, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath. ³⁹He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again. (Psalm 78:38-39).

The LORD is compassionate, and restrains his anger, because He knows the frailty of our frame and is always aware that we are but dust.

- As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. ¹⁴For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:13-14).

As an earthly father shows compassion to his children, the LORD shows compassion to those who are devoted to Him.

- He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. ³⁴To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the earth. (Lam. 3:33-34).

God does not willingly afflict, grieve or crush the people of the earth.

- Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. (Micah 7:18).

The LORD delights in steadfast love and pardons iniquity for those who put their faith in Him and accept His plan of salvation.

I hid my face, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart: (v17)

God sent prophet after prophet to warn Israel of impending doom if they did not repent of their wicked ways, forsake their idols and foreign gods and humble themselves and turn to the LORD their God. Rather than heeding the word of the prophets Israel set their hearts diamond hard against them.

- They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. (Zech. 7:12).

Following is a list of sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem throughout their generations. Unrestrained these sins eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land.

They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land.

Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The lesson for today: by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

The wicked are like the tossing sea: (v20) the purpose here is to contrast the condition of the wicked to those who enjoy peace. Those who have seen the foaming waves tossed by the wind of a hurricane or a violent storm powerfully tumble and lash upon the shores of the beach threatening to destroy anything before it will appreciate the force of this image.

However the sea is not always in a state of roaring and raging waves, but is often calm enough for people to enjoy swimming and playing in, nevertheless the waves are never fully resting or entirely calm, but are always in a state of movement. The picture is of a troubled and ever-moving and restless sea. It beautifully symbolise the troubled and restless thoughts of the wicked it matters not if they are kings or lowly; rich or poor; male or female; old or young; living in palaces or in tents all the

wicked are like the troubled and restless sea in that the mind never finds any lasting rest or permanent peace. This is because wealth, pleasure and fame all leave self, ego and pride unsatisfied and unfulfilled. Added to this the wicked are filled with passions of pride, envy, malice, lust, ambition and revenge which leave no room for peace in the heart and make peace in the mind and conscience impossible. There may be temporary moments where there is a sense of calm, but there is no permanent peace.

No one stands before God free of sin, we all have passions to be subdued and consciences that may be troubled with the recollections of past guilt. There is nothing in this world that can give permanent and lasting peace to the heart and mind, but the pardoning mercy of the Redeemer. When the life of the righteous reaches its end and they retire to rest they can die not as the troubled waves of the ocean, but peacefully in the loving and protecting arms of their Saviour.

The wicked toss up mire and dirt: (v20) the turbulent waters of the sea cast up muddy waters from the depths of its miry floor, likewise the hearts of the wicked cast up malice, nastiness, hate, jealous passions, covetous, discord, conflict, arguments and such like things. This is why the LORD says: -

- There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked. (Isaiah 48:22).

Because of Israel's gross wickedness, lack of justice and greed for unjust gain they continued backsliding in the way of their own heart, passions and desires which resulted in God hiding His face, meaning He withdraw His favor and utter destruction came upon their land, their cities, their towns and upon Jerusalem and the Temple of God. Despite this extreme rebellion and gross wickedness God gives Israel the following promise: -

- I will heal and lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips, peace, peace, to the far and to the near, says the LORD, and I will heal him (v18-19).

The following two things should be highlighted here: -

- 1 This promise only applies to those that mourn, meaning they are repentant over their sin and the dishonour they have brought to God.
- 2 The words, "to the far and the near," shows that this principle not only applies to the repentant exiles in Babylon, but also applies to all God's people of all generations.

The Commonwealth of Israel.

It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ.

This is because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). This means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said: -

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the

law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world. The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

End.