

**Breaking Really Bad
But God's Grace Still Exists
Isaiah 57:5 – 13**

Scripture quotations are taken from the following translations:

ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB),
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,
1975, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission. www.Lockman.org**

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996-2016 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com> All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

The Good News Translation Bible (GNB) text used in this product is being used by permission. Copyright © American Bible Society, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version® Release 2.0. (ISV) Copyright © 1996–2011 by the ISV Foundation. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY

Some of the Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright ©1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission. All rights reserved

We stopped last time in the middle of Isaiah either prophesying about the coming King Manasseh administration or addressing them directly. Judging that he was sawn in half, I tend to think he is talking directly to Manasseh who wound up being the worst King ever in Judah. He repented and returned to the Lord at the end of his life but for 50 years, the name of the game was idolatry, infanticide, the cancellation of Temple worship and the cancellation of those who would dare to stand for YAHWEH. Persecution was politically correct.

As we began Isaiah 57, we learned about the Lord rescuing those who love Him and removing them before His judgement falls.

Then we began to find out about those who were “running the show” in Judah. They will discover who really is running the show.

Again, our high-altitude outline of this part of Isaiah, simply because the contrast then with what we see in our culture today is so remarkable.

10,000 Feet

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 child sacrifice; 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)

Back to our text. Isaiah continues to discuss the lifestyle of those who are following the leadership of King Manasseh; “a nation that sees “righteousness” as a matter of correct cultic behavior.” (Oswalt 1998, 475)

Here is the thing, they are making absolutely sure that they go to Temple every so often. They make their nod to God. They run up and light a candle really quick or take in a worn-out bull or goat to sacrifice saving the best for themselves. They tip God. Then they run off and do what they really want to do. Welcome to the 21st Century church(Revelation 3:14 – 22).

These are people who believe that they are good to go spiritually because they were born in Judah, they live in the promised land and God is only interested in their religious life, sort of, but not in everything they do. God’s view is entirely different.

Isaiah 57:4b–6

“...Are you not children of rebellion, Offspring of deceit, Who inflame yourselves among the oaks, Under every luxuriant tree, Who slaughter the children in the ravines, Under the clefts of the rocks? Among the smooth stones of the ravine Is your portion, they are your lot; Even to them you have poured out a drink offering, You have made a grain offering. Should I relent of these things?” (NASB 2020)

Those who have rejected YAHWEH have first of all given themselves over to a lifestyle of promiscuity, and they are quite public about it too. Is Isaiah going out of his way to provide the grosser highlights of their pagan life? Yes, he is drawing a contrast.

Most of the nation was embraced a worldview inconsistent with be a faithful follower of YAHWEH. Not dissimilar to what we are seeing taking place within the church today.

There have been numerous comments made about the acceleration of people leaving the church due to the pandemic, but the dirty truth is that those who are leaving were already on the way out anyhow. The pandemic simply accelerated the overall process. In Judah, the nation was already leaving YAHWEH,

the death of King Hezekiah and the coming into power of his son, Manasseh, who made evil politically correct, simply accelerated it.

In the scriptures, there are two things that the prophets all agreed on and were disgusted with, pagan fertility rites and child sacrifice. We don't call them that today, but they are really the same. The same fallen ones who were behind this then are still behind this today. We think we are modern by couching this in other terms such as choice, hook ups, friends with benefits, women's health or even the word love.

The problem though is when our culture says love, they mean eros, not agape or fileo.

The prophet Hosea referred to the same lifestyle choice problems in that took place in Israel and Judah.

Hosea 4:13–14

“At sacred places on the mountain tops they offer sacrifices, and on the hills they burn incense under tall, spreading trees, because the shade is so pleasant! As a result, your daughters serve as prostitutes, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. Yet I will not punish them for this, because you yourselves go off with temple prostitutes, and together with them you offer pagan sacrifices. As the proverb says, ‘A people without sense will be ruined.’” (GNB)

Hosea was not the only one. Once the people were in exile, they just “knew” the YAHWEH was going to return them home quickly because they were Jews after all. Ezekiel reminded them why they were in Babylon.

Ezekiel 16:15–21

“But you trusted in your beauty and capitalized on your fame by becoming a prostitute. You offered your sexual favors to every man who passed by so that your beauty became his. You took some of your clothing and made for yourself decorated high places; you engaged in prostitution on them. You went to him to become his. You also took your beautiful jewelry, made of my gold and my silver I had given to you, and made for yourself male images and engaged in prostitution with them. You took your embroidered clothing and used it to cover them; you offered my olive oil and my incense to them. As for my food that I gave you—the fine flour, olive oil, and honey I fed you—you placed it before them as a soothing aroma. That is exactly what happened, declares the sovereign LORD. You took your sons and your daughters whom you bore to me and you sacrificed them as food for the idols to eat. As if your prostitution not enough, you slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols.” (NET)

Yes, we do understand the Bible teaches that idolatry is the same as religious prostitution, but the worship of middle eastern fertility gods did involve prostitution, both male and female.

In ancient fertility rites, devotees would engage in sexual intercourse with the shrine prostitute and by this means, through imitative or ‘sympathetic’ magic, would seek to ensure that the land and its creatures brought forth in abundance. The shrine prostitutes were highly respected because of their (supposed) role in bringing prosperity to the land. (Powers 2000, 379)

The Latter Prophets indeed protested against Israel's sexual immorality on the social level and metaphorical adultery/harlotry on the national level, but it was the immoral sexual practices performed on the cultic level that called forth the most vehement denunciation. Although the former practices were also breaches of God's covenant with Israel, the latter struck most directly at the very heart of Israel's existence as God's covenant people. (Davidson 2007, 108-109)

The picture being drawn for us is how pervasive this became in the culture. There was no shame as it was taking place out in the open. But we don't do that today? Really? We now have “entertainments” available online, in theaters as well as on television where we can vicariously participate in actions taking place on screen. This is a gateway for the enemy to infiltrate almost every home that engages in this under the guise of entertainment. The Bible simply calls it sin.

Jesus provided us direction for how those who live in the Kingdom, all believers already but not yet, should live in the Sermon on the Mount.

That sermon is God's commentary on what the Torah meant. The standards He presented were very different when contrasted with the culture of 30 AD Israel and they remain so today. He spoke about the root causes of sin in that sermon. By extension, some entertainment selections fell into various places in that sermon. One is found in Matthew 5:27 – 28.

Matthew 5:27–28

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (ESV)

This was a topic Job, in the oldest book of the Bible, talked about dealing with.

Job 31:1–12

"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman. For what has God above chosen for us? What is our inheritance from the Almighty on high? Isn't it calamity for the wicked and misfortune for those who do evil? Doesn't he see everything I do and every step I take? "Have I lied to anyone or deceived anyone? Let God weigh me on the scales of justice, for he knows my integrity. If I have strayed from his pathway, or if my heart has lusted for what my eyes have seen, or if I am guilty of any other sin, then let someone else eat the crops I have planted. Let all that I have planted be uprooted. If my heart has been seduced by a woman, or if I have lusted for my neighbor's wife, then let my wife serve another man; let other men sleep with her. For lust is a shameful sin, a crime that should be punished. It is a fire that burns all the way to hell. It would wipe out everything I own." (NLT)

Today, we all need to join with Job and assess what it is that we watch. Our culture has gone crazy with this, but based on what Job is saying, we are not the first. This is simply an attack vector used by the enemy. The second half of verse 5 though deals with one of the results of profligate living.

Isaiah 57:5b

"...Who slaughter the children in the ravines, Under the clefts of the rocks?" (NASB 2020)

Promiscuity has various results connected to it; babies are one.

This is a direct reference to what King Manasseh did. "The offering of the children was, presumably, a propitiation of the god of the underworld, a charm against death. To Isaiah, however, it is not sanctified by being 'religious'; it is merely (lit.) 'slaughter/butchering children in the ravines', treating them like cattle in a market." (Motyer 1996, 472)

Our culture today, through advances in medicine, still practices the slaughter of children, but now it is done prior to or at birth. The wonderful thing we know and can embrace is that the blood of Jesus covers all of our sins, including abortion, if we repent and turn to Him.

Colossians 1:13–14

"He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (NET)

Back to our text and the continuing downward spiral.

Isaiah 57:6

"Among the smooth stones of the ravine Is your portion, they are your lot; Even to them you have poured out a drink offering, You have made a grain offering. Should I relent of these things?" (NASB 2020)

How far gone is the nation? Not only have they turned to Baal and Molech, but now they have also turned to worshipping nature, they are worshipping the creation. They are worshipping rocks. Today, some hug trees. They are both the worship of the creation over the creator.

As a nation, they have gone from using stones to kill giants to pouring drink offerings out onto them. “The ancient custom was to anoint stones that were worshiped, and to present offerings to them. One ancient writer said of a superstitious person: “a worshiper of every shining stone.” Arnobius the Elder, an early 4th century Christian convert who defended Christianity by demonstrating to the pagans their own inconsistencies, wrote that when he was a pagan he never saw an oiled stone without addressing it and praying to it.” (Freeman and Chadwick 1998, 365)

In our culture today, because of the rejection of God creating everything in favor of evolution, humans are no longer considered to be in the image of God, but they are simply just another animal. Thus, one of the elements of justification used to support abortion, and at the same time the over utilization of resources to protect the environment. A worldview that falls from that which is consistent with itself when higher value is placed on saving an animal over saving a baby human. It is not a Christian worldview.

Paul talked about the nation worshipping the creation over the creator which is the same place much of the world is in today.

Romans 1:20–25

“For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.” (NET)

In verse 6, the word for smooth is הָלָק (halaq) which means smooth...the smooth (stones) of the wadi ...smooth, insinuating...smoothness, falsehood...slippery. (Koehler, et al. 1994 - 2000, 323)

Among the false is your portion.

How false can you be when you worship and make offerings to smooth rocks in the bottom of a dry stream bed. Well, there are other locations you can be just as equally false in. When you no longer worship the creator and instead worship the creation, you enter into a journey that truly has no end. Now we shift from the dry stream bed to the mountain top. From a 700 BC imagery perspective, a valley or dry wadi would also be a type or picture of sheol. But the mountain top was where the gods lived.

Isaiah 57:7

“On a high and lofty mountain You have made your bed. You also went up there to offer sacrifice.” (NASB 2020)

The people also practice their prostitution openly and shamelessly on the heights, where they offer pagan sacrifices. High places in the Old Testament were generally chosen as sites for cultic emplacements for fertility worship. The people supposed higher ground literally put them closer to the god, and the hill was as well a symbol of the female breast. (Horton 2000, 413)

A mountain was also used as a metonymy in the Bible for kingdom or government, prestige or power. They are also used in the scriptures as an image for deity.

As we have seen, here one possible reference is to the people approaching a foreign god on his turf and where he lived, a mountain which was a thought of dwelling place for the gods. It could also be a

reference to the nation seeking support and help in the arms of another government and being required to add on that government's gods, which did happen in Judah more than once. However way we take this, it isn't a good thing.

Wherever they go and whatever they do, those who are supposed to be faithfully loyal to YAHWEH, weren't. Even in their relationships with other nations, instead of being salt and light and reflecting YAHWEH, they were prostitutes. That is the picture being drawn here in verse 7.

For the Jew who is following the law, they would make certain that their home has a mezuzah in the entry way. That practice is referenced in verse 8 but twisted into a practice that was never intended.

Isaiah 57:8

"Behind the door and the doorpost You have set up your sign; Indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself, And have gone up and made your bed wide. And you have made an agreement for yourself with them, You have loved their bed, You have looked at their manhood." (NASB 2020)

Remember, those who are being addressed are Jews in name only. They are following the form of being a follower of YAHWEH, but without any of the referent belief or loyalty that the remnant would be exhibiting. The remnant were the ones who were being canceled by the culture.

A mezuzah is the distinctive mark of a Jewish home. It consists of a piece of parchment, made from the skin of a kosher animal, on which a scribe has written the first two paragraphs of the Shema, both of which include the commandment, "Inscribe them on the doorposts [mezuzot] of your house and on your gates" (Deut. 6:4–9, 11:13–21). These biblical passages are traditionally written on 22 lines, equal to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The parchment is rolled up and enclosed in a wood or metal case, since it has the status of a Torah scroll and cannot be touched directly. (Eisenberg 2004, 580)

Isaiah though points out that the sign has indeed been put up, but the contents are not what is expected. Let's read this in a different translation which makes it clear this has nothing to do with the worship of YAHWEH.

Isaiah 57:8

"Behind the door and doorpost you put your symbols. Indeed, you depart from me and go up and invite them into bed with you. You purchase favors from them, you love their bed, and gaze longingly on their genitals." (NET)

We have already seen the condemnation of the group who is openly practicing their idolatry and sexual immorality.

This group is not as open about it, but they have gone one further by placing memorials inside of their home about what it is they truly believe and do.

I remember when we first moved to South Florida, we looked at numerous homes looking for the one the Lord had for us. In some homes, there were crosses over the entrance to each room. Others had a mezuzah as you came into the house. But the strangest one was one over in Palm Beach Gardens we looked at that had a mix of crosses and buddhas in the house. We were not in that home long as there was also the palpable felt presence of something very evil there as well.

I think of that when reading this verse. These are people who make a show of their so-called faith, but in their homes, they have phallic symbols in the rooms. "This may mean that while some practiced pagan religious prostitution openly (v. 7), others merely pretended to serve the LORD; secretly they were involved in the same religious prostitution as those who made their bed on the "high and lofty hill" and also had made a covenant with heathen idols." (Horton 2000, 413)

They look good on the outside, but on the inside of their homes, they have allowed the placing of sexually oriented material, and given it a place of honor. Who knows, maybe you would go inside their home and find the living room chairs would all be facing an Asherah pole.

We see this today with the continuing problem many men and women have with pornography. While many struggle with and have achieved victory over porn, many more are still in the middle of the fight and some, do not fight at all as they have fully embraced the lie of the enemy. Barna reported in 2016 that those who are practicing Christians access porn 34% of the time but those who say they are Christians but in name only, 59% of the time.

The evangelical church in America is in crisis but, for many people, it doesn't feel that way. But we have to stop pretending that we are a moral majority and face the fact that we are losing the culture war. Abortion, same-sex marriage, sex slavery, pornography, transgenderism, explicit sex education in schools—the floodgates have been opened. The god of secularism and uninhibited sexual idolatry appears to have won the battle; the God of the Bible has given way to the gods of paganism. The world looks at us with neither appreciation nor respect. (Lutzer 2018, 67)

Isaiah is pointing out to us the condition of Judah, those who eventually would wind up, along with their children, going into exile or perishing in judgement. What was needed he has already pointed out, repentance. That has not changed in over 2700 years.

John Knox prayed, "Give me Scotland or I die!" George Whitefield prayed, "Give me souls, or take my soul!" Today, tens of millions of Americans Christians need to pray, "God, give us revival or we die!" (Brown 2021, 16)

Is revival possible today? Yes. How? Prayer and repentance from God's own people.

We must move away from there being only 6% of those who profess Christ having a Christian worldview. This means there is a need for revival among believers first.

We need to proclaim Christ crucified and be about the business of the Great Commission. We have the best news in the universe, Jesus Christ died for our sins and then He rose from the dead and is at the right hand of the Father as our intercessor, and very soon He is coming back to take us to be with Him.

Revival begins with those who already know Him but have allowed other things to get in the way, just like what happened to the people of Judah.

Isaiah 57:9

"You have journeyed to the king with oil And increased your perfumes; You have sent your messengers a great distance And made them go down to Sheol." (NASB 2020)

The word used here in the Hebrew is the word מֶלֶךְ (melek) which means king or ruler king, ruler a male sovereign ruler of a kingdom. (Lexham Press 2017)

The NIV translates this word as Molech. That is the Hebrew word מֹלֵךְ (molek). Dangerously close, so much so that commentaries discuss both options .

Shades of King Ahaz and his attempts to create a liaison with the Assyrian Empire against Syria and the northern kingdom, Israel. A liaison that backfired multiple times on Judah. Recall that "King Ahaz worshipped Baal, passed his son through the fire, and sent envoys with rich presents to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, rather than trusting God to deliver the nation as Isaiah had prophesied (7:1–10; 2 Kgs 16:1–20; 2 Chr 28:1–4, 16–27). This failure to trust God was also a problem for Hezekiah when his "ambassadors, envoys" went far away to Egypt (1:1–9; 30:1–7; cf. Ezek 23:16) and also when he accepted envoys from Babylon that were interested in forming a political coalition against Assyria (39:1–6). This idea of comparing political dependence on other nations to prostitution was already used by

Hosea, and later Ezekiel will also use this kind of imagery in the description of Judah's apostasy (Ezek 23)." (Smith 2009, 556)

In trusting other nations for your future, being unequally yoked with unbelievers, the result has normally been death to many in the nation. King Hezekiah tried to establish a treaty with Egypt and in judgement, lost all the cities of Judah except Jerusalem and placed himself in a situation that only YAHWEH could get him out of.

Isaiah 57:10

"You were tired out by the length of your road, Yet you did not say, 'It is hopeless!' You found renewed strength, Therefore you did not faint." (NASB 2020)

YAHWEH had a simple goal for His chosen people. They were to point the nations back to Him. They failed. Not only were they no longer pointing anyone to YAHWEH, but they were now into traveling internationally to promote treaties with unbelieving nations they should not be aligning with while spreading and adding to their growing pantheon of foreign gods to worship. They traveled wherever necessary and did not give up.

The goal for those who were looking to other nations was stated to be a noble goal, security for the nation. Military and political security, but at the cost of being required to allow folks from those countries to bring in their false belief systems. Isaiah dealt with this subject in depth with the military alliance delegation from King Hezekiah to Egypt back in Isaiah 19.

As seen with King Ahaz, military alliance also meant new gods.

The similarities to what we see taking place today worldwide is deafening. Once again, Solomon was right.

Isaiah 57:11

"Of whom were you worried and fearful When you lied, and did not remember Me Nor give Me a thought? Was I not silent, even for a long time, So you do not fear Me?" (NASB 2020)

YAHWEH asks a very pointed question...why? This question gets down to the very basics, who is it that you fear more than the creator of the universe? In the Hebrew, He. is literally asking who do you dread.

The term "דָּאָד (dag) dread," carries implications of worshipful commitment. This is the awe, the "dread," the fear that is basic to worship and to faith. It is the fear toward YHWH recommended in the oft-repeated proverb, "the fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom" (Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7). Here apparently a greater dread has replaced it and made apostasy possible. (Watts 2005, 831)

Once again comes the reminder of those who have sought solace in the arms of others have lied to themselves. Isaiah has dealt with this in the past as well.

Isaiah 28:14–15

"Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers, Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, And with Sheol we have made a pact. The gushing flood will not reach us when it passes by, Because we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception."" (NASB 2020)

Lying is one thing but lying to preserve political power and then believing your own lies, that is something entirely different. The leaders of Judah were involved in this activity. Political and business leaders have been involved in this practice for thousands of years.

Lying is something that comes natural to us. It is one of the things we do not have to train our children to do, rather we must train them not to lie. Why is this? What is the reason?

Lying, deception, misleading, misdirection, spinning, blame shifting; they all have the same source. The fallen sin nature. We are all S-I-N positive. Yes, you can be trained to do it better than others as well. While the prophets were busy providing warning after warning and urging the people to repent, they did not even give Him a thought. YAHWEH took the northern kingdom away into captivity, and He also miraculously saved Judah from the Assyrian Empire, but they apparently felt like they deserved that and considered that even in the face of that miracle, God was silent. “Over what period can it truly be said that the Lord seemed inactive while his people pursued other gods and flirted with political alliances?” (Motyer 1996, 474)

Christianity’s presupposition begins with a God who is there, who is the infinite-personal God, who has made man in His image. He has made man to be a verbalizer in the area of propositions in his horizontal communication to other men. Even secular anthropologists say that somehow or other, they do not know why, man is a verbalizer. You have something different in man. The Bible says, and the Christian position says, I can tell you why: God is a personal-infinite God. There has always been communication, before the creation of all else, in the Trinity. And God has made man in His own image, and part of making man in His own image is that man is a verbalizer. That stands in the unity of the Christian structure. (Schaeffer 1982, 326)

Psalms 19:1–3

“The heavens are declaring the glory of God, and their expanse shows the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they reveal knowledge. There is no speech nor are there words— their voice is not heard—” (ISV)

God is not silent, never has been. For those in Judah though, since they want to allege that, God will remind them of just how together they really are.

Isaiah 57:12

“I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, And they will not benefit you.” (NASB 2020)

The people have a completely false sense of their own righteousness. So God tells them since you think you are ok, I will show to others just how ok you really are. “Israel’s righteousness was more than profitless—it was outrageous impiety.” (Bannister and Hemenway 1886, 236)

Or to put it in terms we would understand today, “so you think you have it all together, let’s take a look and then you tell me how that is working out for you.” It isn’t. They will complain, it is what they do. It is what we do as well.

Isaiah 57:13

“When you cry out, let your collection of idols save you. But the wind will carry them all up, And a breath will take them away. But the one who takes refuge in Me will inherit the land And possess My holy mountain.” (NASB 2020)

Since you fear and believe in the assertions made by those fallen ones pretending to be gods who cannot even predict the future (Isaiah 41:22) call out to them. Let them save you. Judgement is coming. I am reminded of the encouraging comments made by Elijah when he was confronting the priests of Baal.

1 Kings 18:27–29

“At noon Elijah started making fun of them: “Pray louder! He is a god! Maybe he is daydreaming or relieving himself, or perhaps he’s gone on a journey! Or maybe he’s sleeping, and you’ve got to wake him up!” So the prophets prayed louder and cut themselves with knives and daggers, according to their ritual, until blood flowed. They kept on ranting and raving until the middle of the afternoon; but no answer came, not a sound was heard.” (GNB)

The false gods are lightweights. They were challenged earlier to predict the future and they did not even respond. Lightweights. Now YAHWEH simply says they will blow away...serious lightweights. We have seen through our study of Isaiah that Judah thought they could secure their inheritance by having the right nations aligned with them for protection. Aligning with Assyria was a huge mistake, and Egypt, they were a no show. As the Lord pointed out to Judah, that is not how He does things.

King Manasseh will pick up where Hezekiah left off and will try and appease the foreign powers around him. It will not work as in the middle of his idolatry, he will be taken prisoner. His false gods do not help him at all. But as a result of what happens to him, he repents.

2 Chronicles 33:11–13

“...so the LORD brought in the army commanders who worked for the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him in bronze chains, and took him off to Babylon. But when he was in trouble, he sought the face of the LORD his God, humbled himself magnificently before the God of his ancestors, and prayed to him. Moved by Manasseh’s entreaties, the LORD heard his supplications and brought him back to his kingdom in Jerusalem. That’s how Manasseh learned that the LORD is God.” (ISV)

“Assyrian annals show clearly that Manasseh was forced into submission, his name appearing in a text during the reign of the Assyrian emperor Esarhaddon that lists those who gave tribute for building projects in Nineveh and among a list of kings who supported Esharaddon’s son Ashurbanipal against Egypt (see ANET 291, 294; cf. Dillard 1987:264–265). During Manasseh’s reign, several revolts were launched against the Assyrians, most notably by Ashurbanipal’s twin brother, Shamash-shum-ukin, in Babylon (652–648 BC), but possibly also by leaders in the Levant region. It may be that Manasseh was implicated or participated in one of these. If it was the former, this would explain his exile in Babylon.” (Boda 2010, 406-407)

A wicked King who persecuted and killed many, who made child sacrifice politically correct as well as the worse types of idolatry, all referenced in this section of Isaiah. As judgement begins to take place and he is taken prisoner by the Assyrian Empire, he does something no one would have guessed he would ever do, he repents.

His idols did not help him. The sacrifice of at least one of his sons did not help him. His alignment with surrounding nations did not help him as he was humbled by the Assyrians. A breath took them away. As events overtook him a decision was made, maybe dad got it right. He decided to take refuge in YAHWEH. From the Apocrypha.

Prayer of Manasseh 8–15

“Therefore you, O Lord, God of the righteous, have not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against you, but you have appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner. For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sand of the sea; my transgressions are multiplied, O Lord, they are multiplied! I am not worthy to look up and see the height of heaven because of the multitude of my iniquities. I am weighted down with many an iron fetter, so that I am rejected because of my sins, and I have no relief; for I have provoked your wrath and have done what is evil in your sight, setting up abominations and multiplying offenses. And now I bend the knee of my heart, imploring you for your kindness. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge my transgressions. I earnestly implore you, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me! Do not destroy me with my transgressions! Do not be angry with me forever or store up evil for me; do not condemn me to the depths of the earth. For you, O Lord, are the God of those who repent, and in me you will manifest your goodness; for, unworthy as I am, you will save me according to your great mercy, and I will praise you continually all the days of my life. For all the host of heaven sings your praise, and yours is the glory forever. Amen.” (NRSV)

Hearing his prayer, God granted his request and returned him to his throne. This highlights God's grace for any generation who will humbly pray to him. Even if that generation has sinned greatly (and one could not imagine any generation worse than Manasseh's), they would get a hearing before Yahweh. (Boda 2010, 408)

Manasseh was returned to the land and began the process of undoing everything he had done. Unknown to him or the people, he also became a picture of Judah pre and post exile.

The message from the Lord is clear, reliance on false gods, the no gods consisting of fallen created beings, results in loss. ON the other hand, as the remnant learned and as Manasseh would learn, taking refuge in YAHWEH changes everything.

It is never too late to abandon the worthless protection of these creations of human pride and fear. It is always possible to face reality and hurl oneself under the shelter of the Rock (17:10; 26:4; 30:29; 44:8). Those who do so will find all the ancient promises to be true, but in a deeper sense than they ever imagined. Those who abandon the false supports they have created for themselves in their attempts to conquer the world will discover to their surprise that they have been adopted by the owner of the world and that they have become heirs to it. (Oswalt 1998, 483)

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.

Works Cited

- Bannister, H., and F. D. Hemenway. 1886. *Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Commentary on the Old Testament*. Edited by D. D. Whedon. Vol. VII. New York, NY: Hunt & Eaton.
- Boda, Mark J. 2010. *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary:1-2 Chronicles*. Vol. 5. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Brown, Michael L. 2021. *Revival Or We Die*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.
- Davidson, Richard M. 2007. *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Eisenberg, Ronald L. 2004. *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions*. 1st Edition. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Freeman, James M., and Harold J. Chadwick. 1998. *Manners & Customs of the Bible*. North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers.
- Horton, Stanley M. 2000. *Isaiah, A Logion Press Commentary, Logion Press Commentary Series*. Springfield, MO: Logion Press.
- Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm. 1994 - 2000. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Vol. 1. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Lexham Press. 2017. *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Lutzer, Erwin W. 2018. *The Church in Babylon: Heeding the Call to Be a Light in the Darkness*. Kindle Edition. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.
- Motyer, J. A. 1996. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Oswalt, John N. 1998. *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Powers, B. W. 2000. "Adultery." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. 1982. *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. Vol. 1, in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, by Francis A. Schaeffer. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.
- Smith, Gary. 2009. *Isaiah 40 - 66, The New American Commentary*. Vol. 15B. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Watts, John D. W. 2005. *Isaiah 34 - 66, Word Biblical Commentary*. Revised Edition. Vol. 25. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.