

A CALL TO JUDGMENT AND JUSTICE
Isaiah 56, 57

Intro: Israel had been taken into captivity, and the same thing was going to happen to Judah--for one reason: disobedience to God.

The prophets had been raised up to warn the people. Such a warning is given in these two chapters. Isaiah was issuing such a call here in chapter 56. We see the call in 56:1, 2.

I. THE CALL (Isa. 56:1, 2).

If we can distinguish between judgment and justice, or righteousness, it seems possible that

- 1) "Judgment" has to do with the right decisions made between one man and another;
- 2) "Justice" has to do with a right relationship to God.

Why are they given in this order since man's relationship to God usually precedes his relationship to other men? It must be that a man's relationship with other men usually indicates what his relationship to God is.

V. 2 shows that God's blessing was even then, at that late hour, promised to those who would obey God.

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR FOREIGNERS (Gentiles) AND EUNUCHS (Isa. 56:3-8).

The call had to be issued in grace (v. 1). Here are two more instances of grace.

These were ordinarily excluded from fellowship with God, but this evidently was done to provoke the people of Judah to jealousy, as was the eventual opening of the door to the Gentiles in NT times. Cf. Rom. 11:11.

Eunuchs were usually excluded because

- 1) their self-mutilation was performed in honor of some heathen god,
- 2) and because by the Law they were considered unfit for the service of the Lord. Cf. Lev. 21:16ff.; 22:23-25; Deut. 23:1.

For the door to be opened to such people as both Gentiles and eunuchs showed how low Judah had sunk in the moral scale.

Part of the reason for the spiritual condition of Israel is seen in the last part of chapter 56:

III. THE DENUNCIATION OF JUDAH'S LEADERS--their spiritual leaders (Isa. 56:9-12).

They are called watchmen that are blind,
dumb dogs which cannot bark,
greedy dogs that can never get enough,
shepherds that cannot understand.
They were selfish, covetous, pleasure-loving.

What an indictment of those who should have been the godly men of the nation!

IV. A MYSTERIOUS ACT OF GOD (Isa. 57:1, 2).

What did this mean? Why would God remove the righteous men of the nation at a time when they were so greatly needed.

Well, in the first place, they could not change the course of the nation. The people would not listen to them, nor follow them.

Secondly, time had run out for the nation, and God was taking them away before the judgment to come. (Here is support for the removal of the true people of God before the world is caught in the time of the Great Tribulation.)

Here is another evidence of the difference between God's ways and the ways of men.

The leaders have been reproved; the prophet now turns to the people.

V. THE REPROOF OF THE IDOLATERS (Isa. 57:3-13a).

Here God was calling the people to account for what they had done, and for their persistence in doing that which never had been profitable to them.

VI. THE INTERVENTION OF THE ETERNAL GOD (Isa. 57:13b-19).

Note the contrast that the Lord makes between Himself and what has just been said about heathen gods. Cf. 57:15.

See what God does in His sovereign power in v. 18.

He creates the fruit of the lips, not His own in this instance, but those of His people.

What does the Lord create with His people?

- 1) Faith (v. 13b).
- 2) Contrition, or repentance (v. 15b).
- 3) Humility (v. 15b).

The Lord will revive humility and contrition in the hearts of His people.

VII. THE HOPELESS STATE OF THE WICKED (Isa. 57:20, 21).

They are doomed to:

- A. Restlessness: "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest."
- B. Filthiness; "whose waters cast up mire and dirt."
- C. No peace with God: "no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Cf. the ending of the first 9 chapters in this last section: Isa. 48:20-22.

Concl: What are some of the lessons from these two chapters?

- 1) The grace of God -- in continuing to call to Judah;
in opening the door to Gentiles and eunuchs;
in removing the righteous from judgments which they did not deserve;
in stepping in to turn the hearts of His people back to Himself.
- 2) The importance of having godly leaders.
- 3) The awful, eternal state of those who are wicked.

What does wicked mean? Many feel that this is the passage which describes what the word means (since we arrive at the meaning of many words in Scripture by the way they are used). A wicked person is one who has right and wrong confused. He does not know the difference between truth and error. The differences between sin and righteousness are all mixed up in his mind. He is a person who will pursue wrong as though it were right, will stand for error as though it were truth, and will treat sin as though it were righteous in the eyes of the Lord.

If we have need of an example of depravity and of the hopelessness of man apart from grace of God, it is here!