

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

Harry A. Ironside, Litt.D.

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ISAIAH CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

STRANGERS AND OUTCASTS GATHERED

CHAPTER fifty-seven begins with special comfort for those who while seeking to be faithful to the Lord suffer at the hands of others even unto death.

“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness” (verses 1,2).

There is always a danger of thinking of those who die before the fulfillment of promises of future blessing as having lost them. The Thessalonians too were concerned that some of their number died before the Second Coming of Christ. So Paul wrote: **“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”** (I Thessalonians 4:13). He went on to show that they would have their part in the rapture with the rest and would share in the glory when the Lord Jesus Christ descended to take the kingdom.

So here, there were those in Israel who would think the promises are for the future, and as one after another died their fellow believers feared they would not enter into their blessing. When times of persecution came and many were put to death, they would feel they had missed so much, and would not be here for the kingdom at all. But **“the righteous are taken away from the evil to come,”** and though taken away from here, God has provided something for them. Everyone shall rest in his uprightness before God - they will have their place of blessing.

There is no need to grieve for those who have gone before; they are under the care of the blessed Lord; they have gone Home to be with Him.

Then he goes on to stress again the importance of godliness.

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (verse 15).

This is the only place in our Authorized Version where we get the word “**eternity**.” The Hebrew word here so rendered is found in many other places, but here alone our English translators have used the word.

“**Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,**” that inhabiteth the ages. In Psalm 90 we read, “**From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.**” It could just as easily be read, “From eternity to eternity, Thou art God,” because it is the same word, but here we have the word standing out clearly and definitely, “**Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.**”

God dwells in all the ages, for that is what eternity is, a succession of ages. Sometimes in trying to picture eternity, preachers speak of it as an unchanging period. In one sense that is true. They use the expression in Revelation 10:6, “**There shall be time no longer,**” and think of this as embracing the ages through which mankind goes on earth. And then when at last men leave this world or the ages of time expire, suddenly they go out into time where there are no more ages. But that is not true. Ages past, before this world came into existence - and there have been the ages of time since - there will be the age of the ages and ages of ages throughout the great day of God, the eternal day of God.

Throughout eternity one great age after another unfolds, manifesting even more wonderful things in connection with the wisdom, grace, love, and power of our wonderful God. And He inhabits all the ages, He is the God of eternity, and yet He dwells in the heart of him that is humble and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at His Word. That is why prophetic truths should be borne home to the conscience - it is one thing that often makes men tremble - it ought to exercise people before God.

The truth of the Coming of the Lord for His Church surely ought to exercise every Christian heart and lead to the question, “*Am I so living that I would be happy and glad and ready to welcome the Lord Jesus at any moment?*” Many of us make plans and have associations of which we would be ashamed if the Lord should suddenly come.

Years ago, before the First World War, Professor Stroeter, a well-known prophetic teacher in Germany, used to go through the country giving lectures, and using charts to unfold the dispensations. His lectures attracted the attention of the German Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm, who in spite of his many idiosyncrasies, was quite a Bible student, and used to preach in the palace chapel on many occasions.

The Kaiser invited Professor Stroeter to his palace to give him an idea of what he was lecturing upon. The professor was taken into the library and spread a roll of his charts out on the table. The Kaiser followed him as he pointed out various things in the dispensations until the Second Coming of the Lord. After a lengthy conversation the Kaiser said, “Do I understand you aright? Do you mean to say that Jesus Christ is coming back literally, and that when He returns all the kingdoms of the world are going to be destroyed and He will set up His kingdom on the ruins of them all?”

And Professor Stroeter said, “Exactly, your Majesty, exactly.”

“Oh, no,” said the Kaiser, “I can’t have that! Why that would interfere with all my plans!”

The Kaiser’s plans were interfered with. And there are many who, if honest, would have to say, “The Coming of the Lord would interfere with all my plans.” But if we are walking with God as we should be, if we are of a contrite heart and we tremble at the Word, then we shall be in that attitude of soul where we can welcome the return of the blessed Lord. So Isaiah impresses the importance of this spirit of waiting and readiness upon the people of this day.

This chapter fifty-seven ends with, **“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”**

In the previous section, that from 40-48, was God’s controversy with Israel concerning idolatry. That ends with, **“There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked.”**

Then chapters forty-nine through fifty-seven give God’s controversy with Israel concerning the Messiah. And that ends with, **“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”**

~ end of chapter 57 ~

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