

Why do The Good Die Young?

Isaiah 57:1-13.

Sunday evening, September 28, 2008.

I. The Righteous perishes. Vs. 1,2, 13.

A. In these verses we have the bookends of this passage.

The middle portion deals with the wicked by way of contrast.

B. We see the righteous perishing (taken before their time as men would say.)

Similarly merciful men are taken away (again before their time.)

C. No one rightly considers it.

The significance of this goes over their head.

D. For the righteous and the merciful are taken away from (the face, or presence) of evil. They are spared the upheaval and turmoil of the judgment to come.

E. Walking in their righteousness and being merciful they walk into their rest.

F. Seemingly they were dispossessed of all things prematurely; seemingly they missed

out on many of the good things of earth.

Yet the closing words of vs. 13 would reassure us: "He who puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain."

For years Luther preached against the widespread contempt for the gospel in Germany; and against the widespread wickedness and licentiousness. Frequently both in public and in private he asked the Lord to be called out of this world before the dreadful judgment which he anticipated would come. Luther died in 1543 at age 63, and just a few years later war broke out, totally unanticipated. The unrest and battles would last till 1646, and reduce Germany's population from 15 million to 5 million.

When grieving at an "untimely" death, why do we question God?

- Why do we question God's wisdom and love?
- Why do we call God to account before our wisdom?
- Is being placed beyond the upheaval and unrest of this world such an evil thing?
- Is not "to depart and be with Christ far better?" Phil. 1:23.

II. The "Sons of the sorceress" are summoned.

A. The nature of the address: Vs. 3,4.

1. The terms "sons of the sorceress" and "offspring of the adulterer and harlot" are to be understood spiritually.

The nation had forsaken the Lord.

2. The questions, "Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth and stick out the tongue?" are a reference to making malicious sport over someone, and having fun at someone else's expense.

The gestures described were signs of derision.

3. The objects of this mockery were the righteous and merciful of vs. 1 and 2.

4. As such, by their actions, they prove themselves to be children of falsehood; they are not genuine children; they are not a true seed.

B. Their wickedness revealed.

Not only was their wickedness in despising the godly but also in the public and private practice of idolatry.

1. In the low places of the valleys; the dry streambeds or wadis.
 - Here they inflamed themselves with sexual desire for the temple prostitutes under the green trees.
 - Here they made their children “pass through the fire” as they sacrificed them to Moloch, their idol, under the outcroppings of the rock.
 - It appears that the smooth stones of the dry streambed were used to build altars to the idols where they brought their drink and grain offerings.
 - Should the Lord take comfort of satisfaction in these, or should He take vengeance?
2. On the high and lofty mountain. Vs. 7.
 - Here too the altars to the idols were set up.
 - Here too they engaged in sexual rituals to have fellowship with these gods.
 - Here too they sacrificed to these idols.
3. Behind the doors of their homes. Vs. 8.
 - Here too they set up the altars to their idols.
 - Here too they engaged in sexual rituals with the male and female temple prostitutes of the idols, who apparently made house calls.
 - Here they bound themselves with a blood-covenant to serve the idols.
4. In courting the favor of the heathen world for her security. Vs. 9,10.
 - They sent delegations to Assyria and Egypt with costly gifts of ointments and perfumes to court their favor for protection.
 - They even descended to sheol, meaning the extremes they would go to in accomplishing their purpose.
 - Although incurring great hardship, they endured and for a while found what they looked for, and so to them it was worth it all.
5. In lying by denying their identity as the people of God.
 - They suppressed the truth in not remembering the Lord.
 - They would not take the truth to heart.
 - They did so, because God’s patiently holding His peace provided them the opportunity to do so.

C. Reality revealed.

- “I will declare your righteousness...” The lack thereof.
- “and your works for they will not profit you.” In the end they come up short.
- “When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you.” Their vanity revealed.
- “The wind will carry them all away; a breath will take them.” They evaporate into thin air when they are needed the most.

When it counts the most, and when it comes right down to it, you are left with the Lord, the true and living God, alone. Happy is the man who, in humility and repentance can entrust himself to the Lord. To this end Christ came into the world, that He might show us the vanity of our idols, and open to us the way back to God.