

NO PEACE TO THE WICKED

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Isaiah 48:22 declares, *“There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.”* And the same words are repeated in Isaiah 57:21: *“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”* When Moses gave Israel the law, God forewarned the people of the curses that would come upon them if they did not obey him (Deut 28:15-69).

Israel’s history became a pattern of rebellion, and the Lord sent prophet after prophet to call them to repentance, warning them of the destruction they would reap if they refused to hear. Those prophets did not speak words of peace.

Israel’s options

In Leviticus 26:1-6, God commanded Israel to obey Him and promised them blessings and peace if they would do so: *“Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the Lord your God. Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.”* In Leviticus 16:14-39, the Lord then warned Israel of the consequences of disobedience. In Deuteronomy 30:15-19, the Lord summarized Israel’s options: *“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”*

“Peace, peace” when there is no peace

But God also warned Israel not to deceive themselves into thinking they would have peace if they chose rebellion: *“Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law”* (Deut 29:18-21). False prophets then came along to promise the rebellious Israelites

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(continued)

peace and that they would not be punished for their evil. "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: *they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you*" (Jer 23:14-17). God said the false prophets had "healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer 6:14; 8:11). Sadly, Israel *demande*d prophets which would give them these false promises of peace. Isaiah 30:9-10 says, "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." They got what they asked for, but they were not mindful of God's warning not to be deceived into thinking that the wicked would have His peace.

Call to repentance

God's true prophets were sent for the purpose of rebuking sin, not to praise the people for their righteousness. Jeremiah 28:8-9 says, "The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him." The message of God's prophets is summarized well in Jeremiah 35:15: "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, *Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings*, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me." This was an act of love on God's part. Ezekiel 33:11 says, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Jesus Christ the Son of God came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Christ said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: *for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*" (Matt 9:12-13). He also said, "*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). We may have peace that passes all understanding when we turn from sin to live for Christ and obey him. Philippians 4:7 says, "*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"