

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 57:1-2, RIGHTEOUS AND DEVOUT DISAPPEAR

The first two verses of chapter 57 reveal the state of the righteous while the worthless shepherds are being derelict in their duties to safeguard the nation and her people.

These two verses are not difficult to interpret in terms of translating the Hebrew words, but they are difficult to interpret in terms of meaning. These verses may be understood in at least four ways—and I'm not convinced the text fully supports any of them. First, they may be a reference to God's ongoing relationship with Israel throughout the nation's history. Second, they may be a reference to the Rapture. Third, they may be a reference to circumstances as they exist in the Tribulation. Fourth, they may be an explanation of how far Israel's societal and spiritual structure had deteriorated under the leadership of these worthless shepherd/watchmen which will not change until that leadership cries out to God to save Israel before they are annihilated at the hands of antichrist (Mt. 23:39).

The ultimate question here is twofold. What time period is in view here, and is this something that happened long ago and serves as a type of something that has yet to be fulfilled in the future?

Isaiah 57:1–2 ¹The righteous [צַדִּיק] man perishes [אָבַד], and no man takes it to heart; And devout [הַקָּדִים] men are taken away [אָסַר], while no one understands [בִּין]. For the righteous [צַדִּיק] man is taken away [אָסַר] from evil [רָעָה], ²He enters [בּוֹא] into peace [שָׁלוֹם]; They rest [נִיחָה] in their beds [מִשְׁכָּב], Each one who walked [הִלְךָ] in his upright way [נִכְחָה].

This seems to be a prophecy that says the righteous and devout Israelites will be removed from harm's way by some means when God's judgment falls on the nation. The problem with this is figuring out when this is or was supposed to happen. It has been nearly 3,000 years since Isaiah revealed this prophecy. Were all the righteous removed from Judah and Jerusalem by means of death before the nation was destroyed and the people taken into the Babylonian captivity? No. Daniel and his friends were very righteous young men, yet, they were taken into captivity and made to serve the Babylonian kings. We know that was all part of God's plan for history, but how does that fit into these verses? Is this a general truth that takes place throughout the nation's history? I think we would be hard pressed to come up with examples of this taking place at various times, which should have consistently happened up to this point in history if this is supposed to be a general description of God's relationship with Israel throughout the nation's history.

The only incident of which I am aware that fits this scenario was at Jerusalem when the city was surrounded by the Roman Army prior to the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. We will see that “perish” does not necessarily refer to death.

Luke 21:20–24 ²⁰“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. ²¹“Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; ²²because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are

written will be fulfilled. ²³“Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; ²⁴and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

In AD 66, the Romans besieged Jerusalem, but due to some supply line problems, they temporarily withdrew. This gave the believers in Jerusalem time to flee the city and seek refuge elsewhere in Pella, and not one believer was killed. This, of course, relates to first generation Jewish Christians, and the entire situation is a type of the end-times destruction yet to come during the Tribulation, and of the saving of believers beforehand [cf. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, 629-630]. This scenario seems to be a type, the antitype being the Rapture of the Jewish remnant (and the Church) before the Tribulation takes place.

The general interpretation of these two verses held by many suggests that as the leadership fails to safeguard the nation, the righteous die to avoid becoming entangled in God's judgment on the unrighteous. Here is one explanation for that view: “God permitted the unrighteous leaders to live and suffer the terrible consequences of their sins, but the righteous people died before the judgment fell. The godly found rest and peace, and the ungodly went into captivity, and some of them were killed” [Warren W. Wiersbe, “Isaiah” in *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament: The Prophets*,” 65]. This does not seem tenable to me, but this is the predominate understanding of these two verses. Most of them relate the fulfillment of these verses with the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. This just does not comport with the facts of the Babylonian conquest. Some righteous believers went into captivity, i.e., Daniel and his fellow faithful Israelites, and some unbelievers were spared and left in Judah (2 Kings 25:12). Furthermore, other than in AD 70 and perhaps at the end of the Bar Kochba revolt, when did this sort of thing ever happen before or since in the way these verses describe it? It hasn't. It does not seem to represent a general truth that is operative every time God imposes judgment on unrighteous Israel.

“He dies, however, possibly an untimely death. The statement is succinct. No man places such a death upon his heart, i.e. he does not perceive that the righteous had died, nor does he consider what the meaning of such a death may be. The righteous dies unobserved” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:399].

At the same time, the unrighteous are oblivious to the fact that the righteous are departing, nor would they be able to understand why even if they noticed it. There are two ways revealed that the righteous and the devout leave: they “perish” and they are “taken away.” Both the devout and the righteous are said to be taken away, which lends some support to the concept that “perish” means something other than death for the righteous as the result of their disappearance from the presence of the worthless shepherds. The connection is that the righteous man both perishes and is taken away. Due to that connection, the words seem to be somewhat synonymous in this context.

Perish, אָבַד, primarily means “to be lost, to lose oneself, to wander. [I]t is also used of things, such as rivers which disappear in the desert (Job 6:18)” [H. W. F. Gesenius, s.v. “אָבַד,”

Gesenius' *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, 3]. "... to be lost or gone; to pass away or cease to be, to die. There seems to be a cognate meaning between this root and נָדַד to be separated, from which probably it is formed.... [Applied to] flight and refuge" [William Wilson, s.v. "perish," *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*, 307]. It also means to perish, to be destroyed, ruined referring to being in a state of ruin and destruction pertaining to an object and which includes the death of a person.

It could also refer to non-existence, that is, to have a state that no longer exists. It may be a reference to something that is lost. "Perish" is thought to refer to death in this verse, and that may be correct, but the taking away from evil could refer to removing them from the situation without necessarily causing them to be dead to do it. They become as if lost. That seems to be more consistent with the over all context of these two verses. However, almost all the theologians who comment on this situation maintain that it is a reference to death, probably because that is how the word "perish" is usually interpreted.

However, other devout men are "taken away." Could either one or both of these be a prophecy of the remnant immediately before the Tribulation? Taken away, נָטַף, means to gather, remove or take away, harvest. "To collect, as fruits [and] ears of corn, to assemble men, a people, peoples, etc.... to take to oneself, to receive to oneself, especially to hospitality and protection ...to gather up to one ... to take away, especially that which any one had previously given" [H. W. F. Gesenius, s.v. "נָטַף," *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, 67]. "[T]o take, or, receive to oneself ...to gather in, or up" [Davidson, s.v. "נָטַף" *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*, XXXVII-XXXVIII].

This is a passive verb form, indicating that someone or something outside of themselves is taking them away. In other words, the devout men are removed not of their own volition; they are taken. In this context, the sense of the word refers to being taken away, that is, to be removed from a certain place, environment, or mental or emotional state which also involves transport into a new location or state. This word perfectly describes what happens when the Rapture takes place.

Young, however, believes that "taken away" is as much a reference to death as is "perish." He is correct that the word is translated "gathered" and used to refer to one's death as being gathered to his fathers (cf. Gen. 49:29), and he attributes their lack of understanding to spiritual ignorance. "The term *gathered* is used in the Old Testament of a man being gathered unto his fathers, i.e., dying, and here serves as a parallel to *perishes*. This is not ordinary natural death, but rather sudden death, a dying before one's time. Such deaths are not understood by the godless, for they do not realize that God in His goodness often takes righteous men to Himself to deliver from some impending catastrophe" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:399-401].

I agree that "perish" and "taken away" are parallels, but those who view this as a Rapture passage look at them in the opposite way. They see them as being a removal by means of something other than death. I do think that throughout history God's removal of righteous people from an impending catastrophe by means of death is the exception rather than the rule. Possibly the use of death as an explanation for this verse is overstating the case.

This situation certainly brings to mind the concept of the Rapture where the Greek word ἀρπάζω means to seize, to snatch away, to take away, and to take by force. "To seize upon, spoil, snatch away.... Literally, to seize upon with force, to rob; differing from *klepto*, to steal secretly. It denotes an open act of violence in contrast to cunning and secret stealing. Though generally *harpazo* denotes robbery of another's property, it is not exclusively used thus, but sometimes used generally meaning to forcibly to seize upon, snatch away, or take to oneself. Especially, used of the rapture" [Spiros Zodhiates, s.v. "ἀρπάζω," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 257]. "To grab or seize suddenly so as to remove or gain control, snatch/take away" [s.v. "ἀρπάζω," BDAG, 3rd ed., 134].

The Septuagint uses the Greek word αἶρω to refer to the "taking away" here in Isaiah 57:1. It means "to take away, remove, with the idea of lifting away from, usually with the idea of violence and authority" [Spiros Zodhiates, s.v. "αἶρω," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 99]. "To take away, remove, or seize control without suggestion of lifting up, take away; remove" [s.v. "αἶρω," BDAG, 3rd ed., 28].

Righteous and devout are at least close to being synonyms as used here. The Septuagint uses the same Greek word for both righteous and for devout.

Righteous, צַדִּיק, means righteous, upright, just referring to being a person in accordance with a proper standard who is characterized by righteous actions and morals.

Devout, דָּוָה, means goodness, kindness, devotion, or loyal love which is a love or affection that is steadfast based on a prior relationship. This word describes men who are loyal and faithful and who understand their obligation to the covenant community and therefore are considered to be "men of covenant faithfulness" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 545].

The Septuagint uses δίκαιος to translate both words. Δίκαιος means "righteous, just. Used [for] that which is right, conformable to right, pertaining to right, that which is just. This is expected by the one who sets the rules and regulations whereby man must live, whether that be society or God. Therefore, it means that which is expected as duty and which is claimed as a right because of one's conformity to the rules of God or society.... [I]t refers to the one who acts conformably to justice and right without any deficiency or failure" [Spiros Zodhiates, s.v. "δίκαιος," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 457].

When the righteous man is taken away, "no man takes it to heart," and when the devout men are taken away "no one understands."

That "no man takes it to heart" is a figure of speech indicating that people did not consider it important when the righteous departed in whatever manner that happened. "An individual can metaphorically place one's heart toward or upon (or place upon one's heart) an infinite variety of objects or abstractions. In so doing, one is mentally focusing on the object or issue in question, paying careful attention to it or considering its importance" [Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "שֵׁים," *New International Dictionary of*

Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, 3:1238]. This is negated meaning that “there is no man taking it to heart.”

No one will understand what has happened when the righteous and the devout disappear. Understand, *בין*, means to understand, to perceive, or to distinguish referring to having knowledge and responding appropriately. There is no one caused to be understanding.

This sounds very much like what will happen after the Rapture. People will not be able to figure out what in the world is going on. The unrighteous who are left behind to enter the Tribulation will be deceived by false signs and wonders and the deception of wickedness that will envelope the world once the restrainer is removed (2 Thess. 2:1-12). Part of what will happen when the unbelieving world receives this deluding influence from God is that people will not take to heart and they will not understand what just happened to the world when the Rapture takes place and the righteous are suddenly gone. It is pretty hard for the nation, or the world, not to notice that a lot of people are lying around exhibiting all the characteristics of a deceased person, if they, in fact, perish. But if God sends a deluding influence on the world so that they are unable to recognize what is happening and/or believe the lie the government is telling them as an explanation for what has taken place in their presence. That applies whether people are bodily removed or lying around dead.

2 Thessalonians 2:11–12 ¹¹For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹²in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

“Evidently when the Rapture occurs the Man of Sin will emerge and will give some explanation for the disappearance of the believers” [Robert N. Wilkin, “2 Thessalonians” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, rev. ed., 470]. “After the Rapture, God will remove all moral and spiritual constraints, and man’s momentum toward evil will be free” [John Phillips, *The John Phillips Commentary Series: Exploring 1 & Second Thessalonians: An Expository Commentary*, 213].

And what are the righteous and devout being delivered from? They are being delivered from evil. Evil, *רָעָה*, means evil, misery, wickedness, wrongdoing referring to that which is not morally good (as on opposite or perversion of goodness) and so with an implication that the event or action is harmful in various ways. It has the sense of evil behavior, that is, behavior that is morally objectionable.

We could say that any time a righteous/devout man dies he is being delivered from evil, that is, from the evil of Satan’s world system in which we have all lived since the Fall. But individuals are not the context here. The word “righteous” is singular, but it probably refers to the righteous as a collective group, in whole or in part, by means of its association with the devout, which is plural and which leads to the thought that individuals are in view only as a part of a group. The implication in the word translated “taken away” refers to the removal of the righteous/devout as a group. It seems unlikely that the group is removed by being killed off in significant numbers at once by the authorities. The Bible does

not record anything of that nature happening in Israel at the hands of the worthless shepherds. A few at a time, yes; many or all of them at once; no.

If the righteous are not killed off, and if that is a correct interpretation of these two verses, then there are only three other options for understanding this verse and one of them is the Rapture. You might be surprised to know that a number of people believe the Rapture is in the Old Testament, and not just in these two verses.

Here is an example of that Rapture doctrine: "In this passage [Is. 57:1-2], the righteous man is the *tzaddik* [צדיק], or the one justified by faith. He 'perisheth,' from the Hebrew word *ovad* [אבד] [sic; "o" vowel is incorrect; it is an "a" vowel], meaning 'to disappear or vanish.' The context suggests that his disappearance is curiously unaccounted for. 'Merciful men' (men of loving kindness) are said to be 'taken away,' from the Hebrew term *osaf* [אסף] [sic; "o" vowel is incorrect; it is an "a" vowel], It means 'to harvest, or gather up.' Notice that this term is used twice in verse one. It is a term that describes reaping, giving strength to the idea of harvest at the end of the Church Age" [Gary Stearman, *Prophecy in the News*].

But there is a major problem with understanding these two verses that way. The Rapture was a mystery that was only revealed in God's good timing in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 15:51–52 ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Fruchtenbaum defined "mystery" about as well as anyone can define it: "In New Testament Greek, the meaning is both technical and simple: It refers to something that was totally unrevealed in the Old Testament, and only revealed in the New Testament. For something to qualify as a New Testament mystery, it must be something totally unrevealed anywhere in the Old Testament. If it is knowable from the Old Testament, it is not a mystery. A mystery, then, is something only knowable from the New Testament" [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, 651].

The New Testament reveals the nature of a mystery.

Romans 16:25–26 ²⁵Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading* to obedience of faith;

1 Corinthians 2:6–10 ⁶Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED

THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." ¹⁰For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

Ephesians 3:4–6 ⁴By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶to be *specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

Ephesians 3:9–10 ⁹and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; ¹⁰so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*.

Colossians 1:26–27 ²⁶that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Unger believes that these verses represent events that take place during the Tribulation, which is in keeping with the context of Isaiah 56 where the end of history is clearly in view.

Because this has not been seen as a part of God's dealing with Israel throughout the nation's history, it seems to be an end-times prophecy. If this is, in fact, the Tribulation, then all the righteous cannot be killed off and removed, because no Israelite would be left to enter the Kingdom. The righteous man who perishes may be a reference to the Israelites who come to faith during the Tribulation and are martyred for their faith by the antichrist's evil regime. This presents the same problem; if the righteous are all killed off, or otherwise removed, who will inherit the Kingdom? Because the word "all" is not in the text, it is appropriate to suggest that "some" or "many" is the meaning of "perish" and "taken away" rather than "all."

"The time is the Tribulation period, when wickedness will abound. Because of the excesses of the unfaithful watchmen in Israel (Isa. 56:10-12), many of the godly will perish in the violent persecutions under the apostate Jewish leaders, who will side with the Antichrist. Merciful men ('men of covenant faithfulness,' *hē sēd*), who remain true to God's covenant mercy, are taken away (*sp*), expressing a violent death), historical in the persecutions under Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-18), and prophetic of similar persecutions of the saints who will stand true to the LORD in the Tribulation, in contrast to apostate Jewish leaders, who will give in to Antichrist and receive his mark. All the while no one will comprehend (in sin-blinded ignorance of the judgments ahead) that the righteous (man) is taken away from the evil (*hārā'ā*, the calamitous divine judgments of the Great Tribulation) about to burst upon the wicked, prefigured by the sufferings of Jerusalem's fall and the Babylonian Captivity" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1307-1308].

Unger clearly views these verses as a type of the end.

Another theologian believes that these verses are a revelation of how far things deteriorated under the leadership of the worthless shepherds and which is an ongoing problem for the nation. This is a plausible explanation for understanding these two verses. It ties in with the immediately preceding context, and it reveals just how bad things had gotten in Israel, both physically and spiritually. “The final two verses in this paragraph describe the terrible things that were happening to the righteous or devout people because the blind and self-centered leaders were failing to lead the nation in righteous ways. These verses function as another accusation against these wicked leaders.... Righteous persons (probably a collective) are lost and perish, but no one seems to pay any attention or investigate what is happening. The leaders fail to perceive the injustice going on; no one seems to understand the significance their inaction will have on society” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 545]. This also allows for the text to be a type of what will take place at the end of history as Unger viewed it.

This view also has problems though, because the verse is not really explaining whether or not the righteous and devout are taken in order to remove them from the evil in this world, or that the worthless watchmen are killing them to remove them as righteous opposition, whether silent or overt, to their worthless leadership. This view also has timing problems because Isaiah 56 definitely had an end-times context. If Isaiah 57:1-2 was pertaining to Isaiah's day, was it a type of the end-times conditions that will prevail before the Tribulation? That seems likely.

We do know that the worthless shepherd/watchmen were involved in persecuting and in killing off their opposition. They were rebuked by the Lord Himself for that behavior centuries later. This was clearly an ongoing problem for the national, worthless, leadership of Israel.

Matthew 23:34–35 ³⁴“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, ³⁵so that upon you may fall *the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*

Those who walk in an upright way find the ultimate in peace and rest when they are removed from the presence of evil. The place they go is not specified here, and it depends on whether or not we are talking about Old Testament believers or the Rapture of the believing Jews who are in Christ Jesus. Either way they will enter into a place of peace and rest. Enter, **בוא**, means to come in, to enter into a place where they will be removed from evil with the other Israelites who part of the faithful remnant.

Peace, **שָׁלוֹם**, means completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, prosperity. It refers to wholeness or entirety. This state is the ultimate, the fullness of what *shalom* was meant to mean from the beginning. When the righteous/devout are taken away from evil, they will enter into this state of *shalom* they could have had all along if only the nation had faithfully upheld the commitments that they made to Yahweh to live according to the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant.

Exodus 24:7 ⁷Then he took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"

Obviously, breaking this promise has been disastrous for Israel throughout the nation's history. God's temporal disciplinary program has been all that He promised it would be in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. But once the righteous/devout are removed from the evil they face, they will enjoy the *shalom* they only then will enter into. It does not matter how or when, but they will find the peace for which they have desperately longed. The only living Israelites who will experience this are those who will be raptured and those who will enter the Messianic Kingdom at the end of the Tribulation.

Rest, נָחָה, means to rest, to settle down. The "root signifies not only the absence of movement but being settled in a particular place (whether concrete or abstract) with overtones of finality, or (when speaking abstractly) of victory, salvation, etc.... [T]he root *nûah* relates to absence of spatial activity and presence of security ... [This will be] a state of victory/salvation rest.... It is only the presence and favor of God that makes this rest possible" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "נָחָה," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 562].

This rest will take place in "their beds." Bed, מִשְׁכָּב, means couch or bed, a place of lying down. The implication is complete rest, *shalom*. This word is also used as a reference to death, and many theologians assign that meaning to it here. That is most likely here, but we discussed the concept that the word translated "perish" does not have to be a reference to death if one is relating this Scripture to the sudden removal of the righteous/devout however that takes place.

Peace and rest are both imperfect verbs meaning incomplete action. That could be a reference to the believing Israelites who are removed throughout the nation's history. Every Israelite who is a part of the believing remnant will experience this peace and rest. The only exception to experiencing it in a way other than death, will be those who are raptured and those who enter into the Messianic Kingdom when the ultimate in peace and rest will be experienced.

Those who will experience what has been revealed here in these two verses of Scripture are those who are righteous and devout which is characterized here as those who have "walked in his upright way."

Walk, הֵלֵךְ, means to go, to travel, but it is used here as spiritual figure of speech to refer to a person who follows a belief system as an adherent to that system and one who conducts his life and lives in conformance to the mores of that system in a regular, more or less consistent manner, which possibly results in a life or a lifestyle as an extension of the action of walking as regular and patterned. The sense refers to behavior in terms of living or behaving in a specified manner. Metaphorically, it refers to the pathways (behavior) of one's life.

Upright way, יָשָׁר, means to be right, proper, fitting as it pertains to that which is appropriate to a situation. It may also refer to doing what is right and just which means conformance to a standard. Finally, it may mean honesty pertaining to being truthful and sincere.

It would appear that elements of all these shades of meaning are present in the life of the righteous/devout man.