

# God's Two Homes

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Let us hear the Word of God in the Old Testament in Isaiah chapter 57.

The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.

But come here, You sons of the sorceress, You offspring of the adulterer and the harlot! Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth And stick out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, Offspring of falsehood, Inflaming yourselves with gods under every green tree, Slaying the children in the valleys, Under the clefts of the rocks? Among the smooth stones of the stream Is your portion; They, they, are your lot! Even to them you have poured a drink offering, You have offered a grain offering. Should I receive comfort in these? On a lofty and high mountain You have set your bed; Even there you went up To offer sacrifice. Also behind the doors and their posts You have set up your remembrance; For you have uncovered yourself to those other than Me, And have gone up to them; You have enlarged your bed And made a covenant with them; You have loved their bed, Where you saw their nudity. You went to the king with ointment, And increased your perfumes; You sent your messengers far off, And even descended to Sheol. You are wearied in the length of your way; Yet you did not say, 'There is no hope.' You have found the life of your hand; Therefore you were not grieved. And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken it to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me? I will declare your righteousness And your works, For they will not profit you.

When you cry out, Let your collection of idols deliver you. But the wind will carry them all away, A breath will take them. But he who puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, And shall inherit My holy mountain." And one shall say, "Heap it up! Heap it up! Prepare the way, Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people." For thus says the High and

Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls which I have made.

For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, And he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, And restore comforts to him And to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him." But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."<sup>1</sup>

Amen. May God bless to us that reading from his own holy and infallible Word.

I would like to take as our text today verses 15, Isaiah 57:15.

“For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”<sup>2</sup>

I am sure many of us here have gone out looking for a new home. We have our own home and we like it and enjoy it, but we maybe had an ideal home that we would really like to have and to live in and enjoy. It is maybe our dream home. And maybe we have a look and we think, well, it certainly not for us now or maybe in 10 years, maybe in 20 years, but probably for most of us we have that dream, that ideal, that hope, that future expectation.

Well, we would like to look today at God’s two homes, his real home and his ideal home; where he is and where he would like to be.

And his real home, the home where he is is brought before us in verse 15 and it is the high and holy heavens. And it is his ideal home, the home where he would like to be is the humble human heart. These are God’s two homes; the high and the holy heavens and the humble human heart.

Let’s look at both of these homes for a time this morning. First of all the high and the holy heavens. This is really emphasizing that God is far away. It is emphasizing the great gap, the great distance between God and us. And that gap, that distance is brought out in three ways in this text. First of all there is a physical gap and that is brought before us really in the first phrase. He is the high and the lofty one. And then later on it says, “I dwell in the high place.”

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 57:1-21.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 57:15.

Why is Isaiah bringing this emphasis, highlighting this gap to his hearers in Israel?

Well, it is because Israel were under great threat. They were being besieged by the Assyrians and they were really on the verge of being overwhelmed. But instead of turning to the Lord their God, they were turning to everything else and trying every other option. They were turning to foreign kings and nations as this chapter makes clear. They were returning to Egypt especially and the Egyptian army in particular. They were also turning to idols again as this chapter brings before us and especially idols that were on tops of mountains. The idea was that if we could find the highest mountain and worship on top of the highest mountain, then that will get us closer to a god and maybe get us some help.

And some of them are also worshipping the stars and the planets.

Do you see what they were doing? They were turning to the highest powers they could conceive of and the highest kings and highest nations, the highest mountains with the highest idols and even thinking to the extent of the planets and the stars. They were looking high.

And that is why Isaiah comes in and says there is one far higher. There is one higher than the highest earthly king or nation. There is one higher than the highest mountain. There is one higher than the highest planet or star. There is one higher than your highest imagination of God.

This is the one true and living God. He is the high and the lofty one. He dwells in the high place. He is saying basically all these high things that you are looking to in this world, whether they be kings or nations or mountains or idols or plants or stars, they are just nothing. They are just little pieces of dust compared to the is great high and lofty one.

You see, consider the difference. Look at the gap. Measure the chasm between yourself and him.

But there is also a time gap, a time distance that Isaiah brings before them. Notice he says it is the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity. He lives in eternity. It is very difficult to get our minds around this, to really try and understand what this means because we inhabit time

Maybe the children, you may want to look at your watch and you see what the time is at the moment. It is going to be 10:17 and 22 seconds. And you and I, children, we can only live in that one second, can't we? We can't live in 10:17 and 22 seconds and in 10:17 and in 21 seconds or 10:17 and 23 seconds. We can only live in that one moment. We can't go back and we can't go forward. And that is because we inhabit time. We live in moments. We live in seconds. We live in one particular spot in the whole timeline of history.

And God is so different because he inhabits eternity. What does that mean? That means he inhabits every single point of time all the time. If we were to look at the whole timeline of history, the first second of it is as present to God today as 10:17 and 21 seconds. And this moment in time is as present to God as the last second in the timeline of history. When God looks at it from beginning to end and even from before the beginning of time and beyond the end of time, he is in every single second, every moment of time, every year, every day, every century, every millennia is as present to him as this moment is to you and I.

That is a very different kind of being, isn't it? It is mind boggling. We can't even begin to imagine what that must be like or what that being must be like who inhabits, who dwells in who lives in eternity.

That is a big time gap.

But there is a third gap here and it is a moral gap, a moral distance. We are told he inhabits eternity and his name is holy. The next phrase says he dwells in the high and holy place. He has a holy name and he is in a holy place.

Now when we read about names in the Old Testament it is not saying that the particular name of God is particularly pure and spotless. No, name means character. When we read of a name it is usually describing a character and this is saying God's whole character is holy. Everything about him is holy. His love is holy. His justice is holy. His wisdom is holy. His power is holy. His everything about him is holy, his whole character. Wherever you look it is spotless, morally pure.

He has a holy character. He does holy things. He speaks holy words. He lives in a holy place. Again you think vast chasm between him and Israel, between him and us.

God dwells in the high and the holy heavens.

Why is Isaiah bringing these great gaps to Israel? It is because they had such an impoverished view of God. The vast majority of them had shrunk him down so that he wasn't even just one of them on the same level, but he was something more, almost forgotten, negligible, insignificant, weightless.

And Isaiah is reminding them, those that were treating God as just some little thing as somebody or someone to be consulted in just times of danger.

Your view of God is all wrong. You have diminished him. And so he is bringing these great gaps to enable them to conceive of him far more accurately, more realistically and to awe them, to bring them to revere and to worship.

Don't we need this today ourselves? Our day, our generation needs it, but all of us need it. We all have an ability to shrink God in our conception. And really so much in our lives

and in our environments and the culture we live in has this deity shrinking power and influence. And so this is one of the reasons we need to be reminded again and again of the greatness and the awesomeness of God that we might begin to see him as he really, really is, that we might no longer treat him irreverently and insignificantly, but really begin to be awed and humbled before him.

This is where God is. This is who God is. Here is God's whole high and holy heavens.

But Isaiah doesn't want to just leave people crushed, broken, scared. He wants them to go on. And that is why Isaiah brings God's second home before us.

A better translation of this phrase is: "...with him also who has a contrite and humble spirit."

There is a contrast here. There is this high and holy heaven with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit that it seems impossible, doesn't it? How can one so high and one so holy also live in one so humble and one so unholy?

But this is God's ideal home, God's dream home where he wishes to dwell.

When we are writing out our criteria for a home, a new home, we are looking for certain characteristics, certain features, certain strengths, certain beauty. And about the homes we are looking at or looking at the plans of though nice, that, we put them aside. We look elsewhere. And here in this verse is brought before us God's criteria for his dream home. Let's see if you match God's criteria, because, as we will see, God is not looking for the best. He is looking for the most broken.

Not many people today are looking for homes in Detroit, are they? You look at that city, once great, now having lost 25 percent of its population in the last five to 10 years. There are large parts of it now that are virtually ghost towns. The homes are broken, fallen down. They are disaster areas. They are consigned, really, for ultimate demolition. Who would want to go there? Who would sit down and say, "Well, yeah, I would like a broken house and a dangerous house and a dirty house and a barred house, a house that is only really fit for demolition"?

And yet that is the kind of house God is looking for. He is looking for spiritual Detroit. He is looking for shacks and sheds and hovels. He is looking for not the best, but the most broken, not the strongest, but the weakest, not the most beautiful, but the most dusty and dirty.

That is what is brought before us here. That is what this contrite and humble spirit really means. That word "contrite" means pulverized, crushed, turned to dust. And humble means lowly, reduced, brought down.

What kind of person is this? This obviously isn't the strong and the mighty and the wise and the successful and those that are self confident, self assured. This is another kind of

person all together. This is somebody who has been crushed and broken by their own moral weakness.

This is somebody who has looked at the law of God and looked at their own lives and said, "I have broken all these and that has broken all of this. I don't have it all together."

When God has said, "You shall not," I have said, "I shall."

And when God said, "You shall," I have said, "I won't."

These are people that look at their moral character and see brokenness and weakness, filth. These aren't people who look at the commandments and tick them all off one after another, done, done, done, done, done. Quite the reverse. These are people who really feel that they are spiritual Detroiters. They are not going out and trying to find fresh tins of paint to try and paint over the disaster area of their own morality. They know that paint will just peel off eventually and show their true nature before God. They can't hide. And so they come before God crushed, weak, saying, "I have broken your law. I have broken your commandments. I am a broken person."

And when a person comes before God like that, God says, "I am there. I am there. That is the one I work with."

He turns away from the mock mansions and he finds these little broken down shacks and he says, "That is where I want to live."

But he also lives with people who are crushed by their personal foolishness, not just their own moral weakness, but their own personal foolishness, people who have come to recognize their own ignorance, people who have come to see that they don't have the mental ability, they don't have the wisdom to live life successfully on their own. These are people who have come to see that they have made so many bad decisions in their lives by trying to follow their own wisdom. These are people who have come to see that if they keep on this path, then they are doomed to disaster. These are people who take the smallest dilemmas and problems to God and say, "Help me. Show me your way, oh Lord. Show me your path."

These are people who have come into difficulties in life and in their families and in their businesses and in friendships and relationships and finances and they know they can't hold it all together. They have been humbled. They have been broken. And so they come and they say, "Lord, I can't take a step without you. If I do I am just afraid of where I will end up. Teach me. Lead me. Help me."

Again, God comes to that person and says, "I am living there. That is the kind of person I like living with."

But there is a third group and it is those that have been broken and crushed by providential pain. I am sure anyone here who has lived any length of time in this world

has known that this is a veil of tears. There are sorrows and trials that come upon us, often very unexpectedly from the least expected places. We have relationships that look so promising and they just turn to ashes. We have physical health which is perfect one day and within hours we can be a shadow of our former selves. We can be doing well in our jobs and earning lots of money a name. Just one day it is all taken away from us.

We can be raising children and they all look so full of potential and promise and hope and then they make a decision. They get into a relationship and the whole thing goes belly up and it is a disaster area. And the pain and the sorrow of these providences can have one or of two effects. There are those who are battered about by these providences, these waves of difficulty and they just stand up strong and tall and they say, "I am going to push through this. I am going to keep on going. I am not going to be crushed. I am not going to admit the difficulty."

They often will rebel against God and they will say, "How dare God do this to me. Why me? Why not him? Why not her? Why not them? Why me? And if I were God... if I could meet God..."

I was hearing recently of a man who had had some difficulties in his life and a Christian met him and was hearing him complain and moan and shout and the Christian said, "Well, what if God actually made you to be? What if you met God? What would you really say to him?"

And they said, "I would take out my .44 and I would shoot him in the face."

Well, that is not the kind of person that is being spoken of here, is it, the person who is afflicted and overwhelmed and yet fights against God.

No, this is somebody who is maybe received exactly the same afflictions as that man with the .44. But instead of trying to fight and instead of rebelling and arguing against God, he runs up the white flag of surrender. He submits and she says, "What do I deserve? If you, Lord, would ever deal with me according as I have sinned, well, this would be the least of my troubles."

This is somebody who sees that however hard these difficulties are in life they deserve worse. They have been humbled. They have been broken. They say like Job did, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."<sup>3</sup>

There is a fourth good and that is those who are crushed by their spiritual coldness.

You have probably been hearing sermons recently on the sufferings of Christ and there isn't a greater subject in the world, is there? And yet you go home and you think, "I didn't feel a thing. I have just heard a sermon on the suffering Savior dying for sinners like me and I feel as cold as that piece of wood. I feel as dead as the grave yard. What is

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<sup>3</sup> Job 13:15.

wrong with me? I read my Bible and I pray and yet there is just no spark. There is no life.”

But this person takes this spiritual coldness and deadness and grieves over it and weeps over it and prays about it and brings it to the Lord and says, “Help. I can’t believe that I just don’t sense anything, don’t feel anything, don’t have any sense of your presence and nearness and warmth in my life.”

This is a person who has been broken and crushed and pulverized by their spiritual deadness and coldness. And God says of that same cold, seemingly lifeless. Emotionless soul, “I am there to...”

That is what this tells us. It doesn’t feel like that, does it? It feels as if he is in his high and holy heavens. But if we are broken and crushed and grieved over our spiritual deadness and coldness we see with him also who has a contrite and humble spirit.

You know, you could be in gatherings of the most amazing Christian singing, music, worship experiences when everyone’s emotions are just heightened and lifted and excited and enthused. But there is no humility and there is no contrition. And God could be a million miles away from there.

But as he comes into this little home and he finds this little soul grieving over their lack of feeling and their lack of emotion and their lack of spiritual sensibility and he loves to dwell there and he is there, whether you feel it or not. That is what the Word of God says and that is what we must believe, not our feelings.

He visits spiritual Detroiters. He visits those who have been crushed by their moral weakness, crushed by the personal foolishness, crushed by providential pain and crushed by their spiritual coldness.

But what does he do for them? He doesn’t just visit. He does something when he visits. He tells us, doesn’t he?

“To revive the Spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”<sup>4</sup>

He comes into that shack, that hovel, that shed and he starts rebuilding. He starts renovating. He starts replacing the brokenness. He starts putting the death out and bringing the life in. He has come to revive.

How does he do that? Well, he does that by his Word and his Spirit. He comes by his Spirit. Obviously this is not a physical, tangible thing. It is a spiritual visitation. The Holy Spirit comes and the Holy Spirit brings his Word.

You can imagine these Israelites. They are... a few years down the road they are going to be in Babylon. They are going to be in captivity. They are going to be miles away from

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 57:15.



Israel and its temple and the visible symbols of God's presence. And they are going to feel God is in the high and the holy heavens. They are going to be reading Isaiah. They are going to be reading Isaiah 57. They are going to be reading about their idolatry which brought them here that God punished them for. They are going to be reading about God and the high and the holy heavens. And then they are going to read with him also who has a contrite and a humble spirit. That is me.

“To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”<sup>5</sup>

What an encouragement. What an inspiration when the Holy Spirit comes with this Word.

And really from Isaiah in 40 on you have got these beautiful words of encouragement that were written for that future exiled people. You think of them coming to Isaiah 53. They come to read of the suffering lamb of God, the sacrifice in the place of sinners like them. They begin to read of this coming Messiah who will be despised and rejected of men and yet one who would come and bear their griefs, carry their sorrows, be wounded of their transgressions, be bruised for their iniquities.

Well, a reviving would come into the soul and what reviving should come into your own souls, believers, as you look at these words? This is how God comes to you. This is how God visits you by reading this Word and the spirit coming and using it to revive and restore the spirits that are so down and depressed. And then reading of his great triumph at the end of that chapter.

“He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.”<sup>6</sup>

“He shall divide the spoil with the strong.”<sup>7</sup>

There is a great suffering coming, yes. But there is a great victory.

And then he goes on and he continues to read maybe in Isaiah 54. And they read there of God speaking.

“Sing, O barren, You who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud.”<sup>8</sup>

“Enlarge the place of your tent.”<sup>9</sup>

And here they are. They are in the confines of exile. They have got little tiny places to live in. They are under such captivity and God says there is going to be a day come

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 53:11.

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 53:12.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 54:1.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 54:2.

where there will not be enough space to contain the spiritual blessing that is going to be poured out as the Church spreads throughout the whole earth.

“For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations.”<sup>10</sup>

“Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed.”<sup>11</sup>

You think of all these widows that had been carried away. Their husbands and their male children, many of them killed by the Babylonians. They are there in exile, lonely and abandoned and they read Isaiah 54 and verse five.

“For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name.”<sup>12</sup>

And it goes on and he goes on to speak of the amazing rebuilding that he would do to these shacks.

He says, “I will make your pinnacles of rubies, Your gates of crystal, And all your walls of precious stones.”<sup>13</sup>

“Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, And lay your foundations with sapphires.”<sup>14</sup>

Well, what a comfort to the Church of Christ through all ages and to Christians in all ages. God takes us in all our brokenness and barrenness and begins to revive and restore and renovate and rebuild and beautify.

What a great promise. He visits. He revives. And he pities.

Some beautiful words, just very briefly. He speaks in Isaiah 57 after this great promise. He says, “I will not contend forever.”<sup>15</sup> He says, “I am chastising you. You are going to through hard times, but it is not going to last forever.”

“Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls which I have made.”<sup>16</sup>

He is saying, “You believers who feel weak and tired and close to giving up. You feel these waves of difficulty and trouble coming on your life.” He says, “I am not going to do this for you forever. There is a purpose in it, a good purpose.” He says, “It is not going to go on and on and on, because your spirit would fail before me, the spirit which I made.”

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<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 54:3.

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 54:4.

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 54:5.

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 54:12.

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 54:11.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 57:16.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

He is looking on and he says, "I know you are fragile and I am handling with care. Be assured of that."

Great promises. God dwells in the humble human heart.

But Isaiah he was a discriminating creature. He didn't give out God's promises to everybody. He distinguished. He has got a message for the negligent and the careless and the irreverent. He is saying, "God is the in the high and the holy heavens. Don't you forget it." He has got a message for the broken and the humble. God is in your heart.

And he is saying, [?]. Do you need to be awed and brought to revere and tremble? Or do you need to be comforted and consoled and encouraged?

He returns to this towards the end of the chapter. After these wonderful promises he says:

But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."<sup>17</sup>

Great peace. Earlier on he says, "Peace, peace." But here he says "no peace." He is dividing his hearers as God's Word always does.

And so I end with this call to those of you who are on the wrong side of the divide, for those of you who have shrunk your view of God and diminished God and treat God as insignificant. He is in the high and the holy heavens. Don't dare mistreat him or diminish him, because the end for such is no peace, no peace.

But for those of you who are humble and contrite, there is a great promise. And in your life he says, "And will bring peace with me."

What an encouragement, what a consolation what a help along life's journey. This is God's ideal home.

God is looking for such homes to dwell in. Even now he is surveying this congregation. He is looking for that dust, for that crushed, that pulverized, that humbled heart. And he is making a beeline for it. He is coming and when he comes he never leaves, never.

May God bless his precious Word to us.

Let us pray.

*Glorious high and lofty one who inhabits eternity and whose name is holy, can it be that you want to live in hearts such as these? It is so irrational. It is so illogical. It is so unbelievable. Were it not for the written promises of your Word. Help us to believe them*

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<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 57:20-21.

*and help us each one to experience them. Move in to broken hearts today. In Jesus' name. Amen.*