

Isaiah Chapter 24

This section of Isaiah's prophecies (24:1 – 27:13), is often called the Little Apocalypse because it looks beyond the immediate judgment of Israel's Gentile neighbors to the final judgments of the Tribulation period and the ushering in of the messianic kingdom. These chapters present universal judgments followed by universal blessings. The Lord moves in cataclysmic judgment upon the earth (erets), not simply on the "land" of Israel.

In these verses "land" should read "earth". The severity of the Tribulation period is indicated by the statement that "the Lord maketh the earth empty, and ... waste". "Turneth it upside down" is better read "distorts." Thus, through war God empties the earth and leaves it a devastated and distorted wasteland. The cities of the earth are described as "desolate" and "burned" as a result of this universal destruction.

Isaiah 24:1 "Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof."

"Waste ... upside down ... scattereth": The prophet generalized and broadened the destruction about which he had written more specifically (in chapters 13-23). The Lord is to deal with the whole earth more severely than He did at the tower of Babel or through the Noahic Flood.

This lesson has jumped from the problems of the Mediterranean world to the problems of the entire earth at the end of the age. We see from the statement above, that there will be a time of trouble such as the earth has never known.

To make "the earth empty" is saying that most life will be gone. This is specifically speaking of the time when the wrath of God is poured out on the earth. The few inhabitants, that are left, are scattered.

Isaiah 24:2 "And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him."

"People ... priest ... borrower ... taker": Neither rank, wealth, nor power were able to deliver from God's judgment.

This is just saying that the wrath is for all. It will not matter what station you have in life; God's wrath is for the children of disobedience. That includes the rich and poor, the young and old, the educated and uneducated, the church leaders, as well as the congregation. All of these are those who turned from God. To disobey God brings the wrath of God.

Isaiah 24:3 "The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word."

“The Lord has spoken”. Isaiah used this expression or a comparable one nine other times to emphasize the certainty of his predictions. (1:20; 21:17; 22:25; 25:8; 37:22; 38:7; 38:15; 40:5; 58:14).

This just means that there are no areas spared. The Lord warned, and was not heeded, and it happened. In the beginning of sorrows, there will be worldwide war.

Isaiah 24:4 "The earth mourneth [and] fadeth away, the world languisheth [and] fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish."

The prophet again called attention to pride as the reason for God’s judgment (23:9).

This is speaking of the time when the true believers have been removed from the earth, so the wrath of God can be poured out. Even though this terrible destruction includes members of the church, they are here because they had not made Jesus Christ their Lord. They were living in sin, pretending to be servants of God.

"Languish" means to droop, or be sick. "Haughty people" would be those who felt they did not need God. They are too proud of themselves.

Isaiah 24:5 "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant."

"Defiled", in this instance, is speaking of soiled in a moral sense. We see the reasons for the earth being destroyed in this verse. Sin is transgression of God's law. They have transgressed not only the law of God, but the law of nature, as well.

God had put limits, or ordinances, on the conduct of the people. It appears they had disregarded God's limits, and gone beyond His limits. They changed the ordinance of God to suit themselves. God had made a blood covenant with His people, and they disregarded the covenant.

In the Old Testament, the circumcision of the men was a sign of keeping the covenant made between Abraham and God. The covenant the Christian has with God is the acceptance of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in full atonement for his, or her, sin. Without the shedding of blood, there is no life.

"Everlasting covenant". Likely, this referred to the Abrahamic Covenant, frequently referred to as “everlasting” (Genesis 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron. 16:15, 17; Psalms 105:8, 10; 111:5, 9), which contained devotion to God’s moral law and salvation by faith in Him.

Isaiah 24:6 "Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left."

This Gentile remnant differed from that of Israel. Presumably they will join in support of Israel when the Messiah returns.

May I say right here, those who have kept covenant with God will be in heaven when all this destruction comes. The "curse", spoken of in the verse above, is the wrath of God poured out on the wicked.

It appears from this there will be some terrible happening, such as global atomic war. It is almost total annihilation.

Verses 7-9: "Merry-hearted do sigh": The future Day of Judgment will terminate all merriment derived from natural sources (Rev. 18:22).

Isaiah 24:7 "The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh."

All of the drunken parties will stop. Those who had been merry-hearted before, now have nothing to be merry about.

Isaiah 24:8 "The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth."

"Tabrets" are the same as what we call tambourines. The harp, of course, is a stringed instrument. It is not a time for singing accompanied by joyful music. You think of both of these instruments when you think of merriment.

Isaiah 24:9 "They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it."

This drinking will be to drive their sorrow away from their minds, not to be joyful. When a person drinks enough to get drunk, the hangover that goes with it is worse than the problem they had before they started.

Isaiah 24:10 "The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in."

Houses normally provided security from outside harm, but they became inaccessible.

This really means there is confusion in the cities. Can you imagine what would happen in the large cities with no electricity, nothing but contaminated water, and people running to and fro? The houses would have to be boarded up to keep them from being looted.

Isaiah 24:11 "[There is] a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone."

This crying for wine is to deaden the pain of their mourning.

Isaiah 24:12 "In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction."

There is no need for a gate, when the walls of the city are collapsed. You can enter anywhere, but who would want to enter into such destruction?

Verses 13-23: The universal nature of this eschatological judgment leaves the people of the earth “as the shaking of an olive tree” (i.e. empty and retaining only negligible remains). The reference to the “uttermost part of the earth” emphasizes the universal extent of this prophecy. This devastation will be so great that “the foundations of the earth do shake” from the aftershock.

Thus, the “earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard”. God’s judgment will rock the very stability of the planet, reminding the people of earth that they have rebelled against Him. The “host of the high ones” (Satanic powers), and the “kings of the earth” (earthly powers) will be “gathered in the pit ... shut up ... many days.”

After a period of time “shall they be visited” (literally “punished”). Notice the obvious parallel to (Revelation 20:1-3), where Satan is bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years and then loosed for a “little season,” only to be finally cast into the lake of fire.

Isaiah 24:13 "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, [there shall be] as the shaking of an olive tree, [and] as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done."

“Shaking of an olive tree”: The same figure spoke of leanness in the judgment against Ephraim (in 17:6).

We know this is speaking of how the olive tree is stripped of olives, and the grape vine is stripped of grapes. This is how few will be left after the destruction spoken of. In the vineyard, there were a few grapes left for the poor and of the olives the same.

This is what is said here. The majority of the people will be destroyed, just a few will remain.

Isaiah 24:14 "They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea."

“Lift up their voice ... cry aloud”: The songs of the godly remnant (verse 6), celebrating God’s righteous judgment, replace the drunken music (verse 9).

We see those who remain are turned to God. In the midst of all this trouble, they lift their voices in praise to God. There is a song in their hearts, because the LORD has spared them. This is one reason I believe there will be some saved during the wrath of God.

Sea, in this instance, is speaking of the people of the world.

Isaiah 24:15 "Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, [even] the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea."

“Glorify ye the Lord”: This call summoned all people worldwide to attribute to the Lord what was due Him.

I believe the devastation that came on the earth had to do with fire. Perhaps, the fires were from a war. Even though all is burned out around them, they will glorify the LORD in the rubble. The fires could also mean, the fiery trials that come on the earth.

Isaiah 24:16 "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, [even] glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously."

“Glory to the righteous” refers to God. “But I”: Isaiah could not yet join in the celebration of God’s glory because he pondered the grief and corruption in the world before that final celebration of God’s victory.

The righteous shall reign with Jesus for 1000 years upon the earth after all of this destruction, which takes place during the wrath of God. These who have turned to God in the middle of this destruction have something wonderful awaiting them.

The treacherous dealers are the ungodly. I do not believe that all who are left come to God, because the Scripture will describe some terrible happening on the earth, and then it will be said, "they repented not". If it were not possible for them to repent, this statement would not have been made.

Verses 17-18 “Pit ... snare”: The figure of an animal caught in a trap set by humans frequently symbolized the principle that life is a series of inescapable traps.

Isaiah 24:17 "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, [are] upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth."

We are in the world, but we are not of the world, if we are believers. The inhabitants of the earth are speaking of the unsaved. We are told men's hearts will fail them for looking to the things that are coming upon the earth. They are caught in the snare of their unbelief.

Isaiah 24:18 "And it shall come to pass, [that] he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake."

“Windows from on high”: In Noah’s day, God judged with a flood (Genesis 7:11). He will judge again from heaven, but not with a flood.

“Foundations of the earth do shake”: Unparalleled earthquakes will mark the future visitation during and after the fulfillment of Daniel’s 70 week prophecy.

Fear is the opposite of faith. Those who do not have faith are lost and headed for the pit. He that cometh up out of the pit is Satan. We know he will be bound for 1000 years. The punishment is not a flood, but comes from the heavenlies.

“The earth do shake”. The largest earthquake ever in history will take place at this time. The Bible says, even the mountains will go into the sea.

Isaiah 24:19-20 "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly." "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again."

“Drunkard ... cottage”: Two more comparisons picture the ultimate collapse of the presumably strong and dependable planet earth: a staggering drunkard and a flimsy lean-to shack or cottage.

This is speaking of the destruction of the earth, as we know it, making way for the new heaven and the new earth.

Revelation 21:1 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

Isaiah 24:21 "And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones [that are] on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth."

In the climactic phase of the Day of the Lord, He will strike against rebelling forces, both angelic (Eph. 6:12), and human.

Isaiah 24:22 "And they shall be gathered together, [as] prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited."

“Shut up in the prison”: The New Testament teaches more about the imprisonment of fallen angels before their final assignment to the lake of fire. It does the same with fallen humans. This verse announces the preliminary punishment of both angelic and human princes:

“And they shall be gathered together”. First to the battle of the great day of God Almighty at Armageddon (see Revelation 16:14).

And there being overcome and taken, “they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison”. In the prison or the grave, and in hell; as captives are, till such time as something is determined and ordered what to be done with them:

“And after many days shall they be visited”; or punished. That is, after the thousand years are ended, when the wicked dead will be all raised; after the battle of Gog and Magog. When Satan, the beast, and false prophet, and all their adherents, shall be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

Revelation 19:20. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

We may see from (2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6), how this is to be understood. The reference is to the abyss of Hades, where they are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

According to this parallel, yippâkedu (shall be visited), ought apparently to be understood as denoting a visitation in wrath every impenitent sinner will sink under his transgression, and rise no more.

Revelation 20:10 "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Isaiah 24:23 "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously."

"Moon ... confounded ... ashamed": In the eternal state after Christ's millennial reign, the glory of God and of the Lamb will replace the sun and moon as sources of light (Revelation 21:23).

Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:"

This and the verse above are similar happenings, if not the same happening. The sun and moon are for light. In the new heaven and the new earth, there will be no need for the sun and the moon, because Jesus will be the Light.

"Reign in mount Zion": John confirmed this clear prophesy of Messiah's future earthly reign in Jerusalem.

Zion is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is made up of individuals who belong to Jesus. The Jerusalem, spoken of here, is the New Jerusalem. All the angels in heaven will see this.

Matthew chapter 24 and Isaiah chapter 24 are companion Scriptures.

Isaiah Chapter 24 Questions

1. Who makes the earth empty in verse 1?
2. Where has this lesson jumped to?

3. What is meant by "making the earth empty"?
4. What is mentioned in verse 2 that lets us know one's station in life will not help?
5. To _____ God brings the wrath of God.
6. Verse 3 tells exactly why all this will happen, why?
7. What does verse 4 say happens to the world?
8. What will happen to the Christians?
9. What does "languish" mean?
10. Who are the "haughty people" spoken of in verse 4?
11. What is "defiled" in verse 5 speaking of?
12. What 3 reasons are given for this defilement?
13. What was the sign of the covenant in the Old Testament?
14. What was the sign of the covenant in the New Testament?
15. Without the _____ of _____, there is no life.
16. What is the "curse" in verse 6?
17. What does this appear to be?
18. What does verse 8 say will stop?
19. What is a "tabret"?
20. What kind of instrument is the harp?
21. What will strong drink be to these people?
22. Why will they drink?
23. Describe the condition of the cities in this time of judgement?
24. Why is there no need for a gate?
25. What is verse 13 speaking of?
26. What will happen to some of those who remain after the terrible destruction?
27. What does the author believe about fire being mentioned?

28. How long will the righteous reign with Christ?
29. Who are the treacherous dealers?
30. Christians are ___ the world, but not ___ the world.
31. _____ is the opposite of faith.
32. How bad will the earthquake be at the end of time?
33. What does the destruction of this earth make way for?
34. Where do we find the Scriptures that tell us who will be thrown into the lake of fire?