

## IV. JUDAH AND JUDGMENT - CHAPTERS 24 - 27

### A. JUDGMENT ON JUDAH'S ENEMIES, CHAPTER 24

#### 1. JUDGMENT IS SURE

TEXT: 24:1-6

- 1 Behold, Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.
- 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 creditor, so with the debtor; as with the taker of interest, so with the giver of interest to him.
- 3 The earth shall be utterly emptied, and utterly laid waste; for Jehovah hath spoken this word.
- 4 The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the lofty people of the earth do languish.
- 5 The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.
- 6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

#### QUERIES

- a. Is verse 1 to be understood literally or hyperbolically?
- b. Why mention all the vocations in verse 2?
- c. How was the earth polluted?

#### PARAPHRASE

Behold, the Lord is about to bring into judgment the whole world of worldliness. Human governments and institutions which have attempted to thwart God's redemptive program

and usurp His sovereign reign over man will be utterly emptied of their hold upon man. They will be made a vast wasteland of emptiness compared to His kingdom. Human potentates and human schemes, high and low, rich and poor, powerful and weak will all be dealt with. God is no respecter of persons. God is going to deal a death blow to man's attempt to take over the world. The Lord has spoken this word, and it shall be so! The world and its worldly rulers mourn at their demise. They suffer! They refuse to believe and therefore do not understand. The earth is profaned and polluted through the rebellion and sin of these people. Laws are violated and fear of God is scorned. The structures of society collapse, and all that is good is defiled. This curse of God's moral judgment has devoured man's carnal scheme to usurp Him. The downfall of their schemes proves their guilt. Such a judgment consumes multitudes. Only a few men of faith shall escape it.

## COMMENTS

V. 1-3 EXTENT OF JUDGMENT: These chapters (24-27) form a close connection with the preceding prophecies against the nations (13-23). They are a climactic conclusion to those prophecies. Isaiah is now uniting into one, as it were, all those enemies of God's people which he had previously (13-23) discussed individually. Judah will also be included because many of her people have rebelled against God's sovereign rule. After this widespread judgment upon man's worldly attempts to rebel against God (and incidentally, the same picture is found in Isa. 2:12ff), there will come a world-embracing salvation (25:6-8; 26:9, 21; 27:1, 6), with the result that the remnant saved from the four corners of the earth will praise the glory and majesty of God, and many will come from the ends of the earth to worship the Lord in Zion (24:15-16; 27:13).

Verse 1 reminds us of God's scattering mankind at the Tower of Babel. There man sought to unite all his worldly

power to build a tower and assault the gates of heaven. It was a rebellious attack upon the sovereignty of God. After that mankind attempted to unite itself in world-empire status, usurp the Creator's directions and rule, and take over the creation to exploit it for its own selfish purposes. One empire after another attempted this—Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. But God triumphed over this scheme of man to wrest the rule of mankind from Him. He did so by establishing His own kingdom among men. It was when this kingdom was established that "the ruler of this world was cast out" (Jn. 12:31; Jn. 16:11) and that God "triumphed over them" in Christ (Col. 2:15). Our comments in the Introduction to *Isaiah*, Vol. I, and *Daniel*, chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, are relevant to this section of Isaiah. We believe the judgments predicted in these chapters (Isa. 24-27) are the same judgments pronounced in Daniel against world-empire rule, and thus their fulfillments began when the church was established. They will have their consummation when Christ returns at His Second Coming, but man's attempt (actually the devil is behind it all) to take over the world and usurp God's rule was judged and defeated at the cross and the empty tomb. God "scattered" that attempt. He "knocked" that image down, ground it to dust and blew it away (cf. Dan. 2). And He did it in the days of the fourth world empire by establishing His eternal kingdom, the Church.

As verse 2 points out, human stature and rank makes no difference to God. All those involved in the great human rebellion will be defeated. All will be judged according to their response to the Sovereign Creator and His program of redemption. Human rulers and the ruled alike must submit to Jehovah. No pillar of humanly conceived society or culture will be able to save man. All man's structures are vulnerable to the inevitable judgments of moral rebellion.

The judgment is inevitable because Jehovah is a God of Absolute Holiness and Justice. He is absolutely Moral. His creation is moral and is morally structured. His word is Absolute Truth. When that word is disobeyed, profaned and

rejected, the inevitable consequences are falsehood and moral disintegration. God has spoken! It will come to pass!

V. 4-6 CAUSE OF JUDGMENT: The cause of the judgment is moral rebellion and disobedience. The judgment takes the form of moral pollution and disintegration of societal structure. The word *pollution* is a translation of the Hebrew word *khanepah*. It is used to denote defiling, profaning, or exploiting something until destroyed. To *languish* is to lose strength or vitality and to droop, wither and fade. Isaiah predicts that the "lofty" people of the earth will languish when God's judgment falls upon human schemes to usurp His rule. The "lofty" people are those pagan rulers and nations (Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Caesar and their modern-day counterparts) who think to dethrone God, thwart His redemptive work and accomplish through carnal resources what they have decided man needs.

The earth is pictured as mourning and fading away as a flower fades away. Wars, pestilences, famines, diseases are results of the sins of the people and are causing this wasting away. The sinfulness of men has polluted the earth. Falsehood brings moral disobedience. Moral disobedience inevitably brings social disintegration (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). This moral malady of man has been transferred to the earth itself so that it is also polluted. Injustice pollutes society (cf. Num. 35:29-34). Murder cannot go unpunished (nor other injustices) without polluting society! When man (who has been made lord of creation by the Creator) deliberately chooses falsehood and moral anarchy, he communicates to the creation beneath him the pollution of his own moral failure, with the result that the polluted earth reacts in judgment upon him to his own destruction.

When man selfishly exploits, wastes, profanes and spoils what God has created to be good, he eventually finds he has perverted and cursed himself. He suddenly awakens to the fact that he is the guilty culprit. This discovery repeats itself nearly every 200-300 years. Man in greed and pride perverts animate and inanimate creation until he destroys his culture

and societal structure. He realizes that good men and good things are in the minority. He realizes that he is responsible for his own predicament. But where does he turn? Still, men will not repent! (cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

### QUIZ

1. What connection is there between chapters 24-27 to 13-23?
2. Why did God "scatter" the inhabitants of the earth?
3. When did God "scatter" them?
4. Who did God "scatter"?
5. How was the earth and mankind "polluted"?
6. What connection does the pollution have to the "curse" devouring the earth?

### 2. JUDGMENT IS BITTER

TEXT: 24:7-16

- 7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh.
- 8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.
- 9 They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
- 10 The waste city is broken down; every house is shut up, that no man may come in.
- 11 There is a crying in the streets because of the wine; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.
- 12 In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.
- 13 For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done.

- 14 These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout; for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud from the sea.
- 15 Wherefore glorify ye Jehovah in the east, even the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the isles of the sea.
- 16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs: Glory to the righteous. But I said, I pine away, I pine away, woe is me! the treacherous have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously.

### QUERIES

- a. Why so much emphasis on "wine"?
- b. Why are houses shut up within the city?
- c. Who is going to glorify Jehovah?

### PARAPHRASE

The juice of the grape will be sorry, the grape vine will lose its vitality, and all those who were glad and merry will be turned to mournful sighing. The gay music of tambourines and harps will cease when the people are turned to weeping. Singing while drinking wine will no longer be going on; drinking for the mere sake of intoxication will grow, but it will only bring bitterness to the drunkards. Cities shall become moral wastelands—jungles of crime—where every house has to be locked against thieves and murderers. The streets of the cities shall echo with the cries of wantonness and debauchery. They shall be filled with pessimism, gloom and despair. The great centers of population are filled with desolation and their bulwarks crumble into ruin. This is the way it shall be among all the nations of mankind. Man in rebellion will destroy himself until very little of real value can be found in him—just like an olive tree shaken until few olives are left. But that valuable "little" that is left of every nation will lift its voice in loud shouting, giving praise to the name of

Jehovah, the God of Israel. From east to west, from the uttermost part of the earth, a remnant of believers will sing, Glory to the righteous. But my heart is still heavy with grief, for evil still prevails and treachery is everywhere. Multitudes remain impenitent and positive reactions to God's judgments are hasty, superficial, and soon erased.

### COMMENTS

v. 7-12 SORROW IN THE CITIES: The Hebrew word translated "new wine" in verse 7 is *theeroush* and means literally, "the juice of the grape." The prophet is apparently trying to portray the idea that the very means by which men had falsely sought for joy would become occasions of despair and bitterness. There would be no more happiness when the juice of the grape was harvested. All the festivities associated with harvesting the grape, pressing it into juice, singing and drinking, would end among the enemies of God, for He is going to demonstrate once and for all the folly of all that. All the tambourines and harps of the world will play mournful music. Merryhearted singing while drinking wine will cease. Strong drink, *shaikhor* in Hebrew, will be consumed bitterly and in despair. This is a graphic description of unbelieving man's predicament in every generation. The things of the world hold no hope. Ever since God demonstrated in history through Jesus Christ the sharp distinction between spiritual things and carnal things, the line of demarkation has been drawn vividly (Jn. 9:39-41). The folly of sin and carnality is much more in evidence and the blessing of faith and righteousness is much more in evidence since the work of Christ has been accomplished (Jn. 16:7-11). And it is interesting, in the light of this passage from Isaiah, that the songs of unbelieving man graphically portray his despair and disillusionment while the songs of believing man are exceedingly happy and filled with hope.

In the great cities of the nations arrayed against God there is moral, spiritual and economic confusion. They become vast

wastelands of human decadance. People must shut their doors and bolt and lock them against thieves, murderers and other lawless men. In the streets echo the cries of wantonness and debauchery. The streets of the cities are filled with cynical, pessimistic, frustrated people rushing to and fro like sheep without a shepherd. These huge cities, monuments to man's vain illusion that he can create his own utopia, are really concrete jungles of desolation. This prophetic picture of Isaiah applies not only to God's enemies of the prophet's day, Assyria and Babylon, but to all of man's rebellious attempts to structure his own benevolent society and create his own heaven. It could apply to Greece and Rome; to England and Germany and America and Russia; to monarchies, dictatorships and republics. All of man's attempts to govern himself are inadequate at best and destructive at worst. They all are to be supplanted by the just, holy, righteous kingdom of God, the church. That is a "bitter pill" for rebellious and unbelieving man to swallow! In his pride, man does not want to acknowledge that he is unable to transform himself and his society and save himself. So the judgment of God upon man's schemes brings about all the bitterness Isaiah has described here. The surrender of man to God's way is never easy and gentle. Man must struggle violently with his own pride and selfishness if he is to surrender to the will of God and enter God's kingdom.

v. 13-16 SHOUTING IN THE COAST-LANDS: As Isaiah takes in this universal scene of chaos he sees a gleam of light and hears a song of hope coming from the uttermost parts of the earth. It is the Remnant. This Remnant is from among the "peoples," that is, the gentile nations which God has judged. This is probably one of those veiled Messianic prophecies concerning the defeat of God's enemies and the institution of His kingdom which originated at the cross of Christ and the day of Pentecost (cf. Jn. 12:31; Jn. 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; Luke 1:67-75, etc.). A very small remnant, a tiny minority of righteous and faithful believers will survive God's judgments and form the nucleus of the church. They will be so few they will be like that which is left when the olive tree is shaken and like the



left-overs when the grapes are harvested.

The Hebrew word *meyom* is translated "sea" in verse 14. It usually means "toward the west." The Great Sea was always "west" in Palestine. The glorification of Jehovah which Isaiah foresees is from "east to west," in the "isles of the sea" and to "the uttermost part of the earth." When Jehovah is glorified, so is His "righteous" remnant. The prophet sees in this remnant salvation brought out of judgment to the isles of the sea and the coasts of the nations.

But this note of hope gives way immediately to a declaration of sorrow and caution. It is as though the prophet says, "Do not soon become too optimistic about how men react. Many of the seemingly positive reactions to God's redemptive works are hasty, superficial, and soon erased." It is as though the prophet sees sinners so deeply involved in wrong conduct they will go on, in spite of all the judgments and redemptions God manifests toward them (cf. Acts 13:44-47; 28:23-28; Rev. 9:20-21, etc.). Jesus faced the world realistically. He insisted that discipleship was costly (Luke 14:25-33). "Many are called but few are chosen," said Jesus. Isaiah was the same kind of realist. Many of the covenant people in his day fell away from faith. They rejected God's signs; Ahaz had gone on in his stubborn sullen way; they were still looking to alliances with heathen nations. They dealt in treachery. God had warned Isaiah of almost total lack of "success" from his preaching (Isa. 6:9-13). He would preserve only a small "remnant" by his preaching. Christians may as well face reality—the Bible teaches they will be a minority until the Lord comes again. The Lord is interested in a faithful minority more than He is in a lukewarm, half-hearted and doubleminded majority. The Lord's standards of success and the world's standards of success are very much different.

## QUIZ

1. What is "new wine"?

2. Why has all "mirth" ceased?
3. What predicament of sinful man does Isaiah portray here?
4. How does Isaiah pictorialize the great centers of population, the cities?
5. What does the shaking of the olive tree symbolize?
6. Where will Jehovah be glorified?
7. Why does Isaiah "pine away"?

### 3. JUDGMENT IS FROM JEHOVAH

TEXT: 24:17-23

- 17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.
- 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 on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble.
- 19 The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently.
- 20 The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again.
- 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.
- 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.
- 23 Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed; for Jehovah of hosts will reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; and before his elders shall be glory.

## QUERIES

- a. Why open "the windows on high"?
- b. Who are the "high ones on high" to be punished?
- c. When will Jehovah "reign" in mount Zion?

## PARAPHRASE

When God executes His judgments upon the present world order, man will be confounded like the wild animal who fears its pursuers and falls into the pit; if it avoids the pit, it is taken by the snare. From heaven God is going to overwhelm man's rebellion like the great flood; He is going to shake the very foundations of man's utopian schemes like an earthquake brings down great edifices. Earthly systems and worldly schemes will be utterly broken, rent asunder and shaken violently. Those forces and philosophies of man which have arrayed themselves against God's rule will be caused to stagger and reel under the defeat God brings upon them—they shall sway like a watchman's hut in a blowing storm. The futility of their rebellion and the guilt of their sin will be such a weight upon them they will fall never to regain complete dominance of the world again. On that day the Lord will make a visitation of judgment upon the principalities and powers in the heavenly places who have rebelled against Him as well as those rulers on the earth who have joined with these wicked spiritual beings. God will triumph over them all. He will gather these forces together in their greatest concentration of power, and He shall defeat them and take them captive like prisoners and He shall imprison them. And after a long period of time the Lord will visit all these imprisoned beings with final judgment. Such will be the glory of Jehovah when this is accomplished the brightness of the sun and moon will seem to fade away. The glorious reign of Jehovah will, at that time, be established among men in the form of His kingdom on earth, the church. And His faithful covenant people

will be brought to glory with Him.

### COMMENTS

v. 17-20 VICTORY: Admittedly these verses are difficult to interpret. Many want to make them apply to the Second Advent of Christ and the end of the world. It is our view that the prophets spoke almost entirely of Christ's First Advent, and in view of New Testament passages which seem to appropriate these figures of Isaiah, we believe these verses and those following apply to Christ's first coming and the establishment of the church.

These verses are a continuation of the idea begun in the first verse of this chapter. Human efforts to take over God's work of redeeming man are doomed to failure and defeat. There is no escape for man's rebellious attempts to usurp God's sovereignty. God's defeat of rebellion is inevitable! This same figure of inescapability is used in Amos 5:18-20 (see our comments in *Minor Prophets* there). The Lord's judgments are inescapable. His power to defeat man's rebellion is overwhelming and inundating like when He opened the windows of heaven and poured out the flood in Genesis 6. God is going to open the windows on high and send down His Son to defeat Satan and all those powers Satan has to hold men captive (cf. Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:15; Mt. 12:28-30). His Son will establish the kingdom of God on earth, the rule of God in men's hearts, and ascend to the right hand of the Father taking captivity captive (Eph. 4:8).

In all this we hear the crash and roar of falling governments and crashing empires. God's judgments are upon them. He brings them to naught. His divine judgments will cause rebellious man to reel and stagger. Assyria fell to Babylon. Babylon fell to Medo-Persia; Medo-Persia crumbled before Alexander the Great; Greece was broken and overrun by Rome. Even Judaism will be "shaken" (cf. Heb. 12:25-29)

and "removed" so that what cannot be shaken (the kingdom of God, the church) may remain. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, "And in the days of those kings (the Roman empire) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever;" (Dan. 2:44). Isaiah is not picturing the final great judgment here but the overthrow of the worldliness of the world. The destructiveness of rebellion and sin will bring about the downfall of all earthly systems trying to save men. If Daniel's prediction is correct, and we believe it is, world-wide rule by human empires or kingdoms is never to rise again! The "fourth" kingdom of Daniel 2 was the last universal, human empire. That was the Roman empire. The church is now, and ever shall be, the only universal kingdom. Isaiah, in this passage (v. 20), is agreeing with Daniel (see our comments in *Daniel*, College Press).

v. 21-22 VANQUISHING: When God defeats the world of human rebellion and world-government usurpation, He will *visit* the "host of the high ones on high," and the kings of the earth upon the earth, to imprison them. The Hebrew word translated *punish* in verse 21 is *pokad* which is usually translated *visit* (as in verse 22). At the accomplishment of the redemption of man — at the death and resurrection of Christ — the god of this world, Satan, was "cast out" (Jn. 12:31; 16:11). Satan was "bound" (Mt. 12:28-30; Rev. 20:1-3). Satan's power was "destroyed" (Heb. 2:14-15). The New Testament also indicates (as well as Dan. 10:13, 20) the devil had "angels" or "princes" of the abyss to help him lead sinful men in rebellion (II Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-18, etc.). But these rebellious angels have been vanquished to a prison house of God (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) awaiting final punishment. Christ triumphed over all principalities and powers (Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:20-21; Col. 1:16), and He led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8). Many days after Isaiah penned his 24th chapter, God *visited* the earth in His Son and vanquished the principalities and powers arrayed against His rule over man, freed man from their

power, and bound the rebel Satan and his helpers — whether “hosts on high” or “kings on the earth.” Those who sat in darkness have seen a great light (cf. Isa. 9:1-7). Captives have been liberated (Isa. 61:1-4; Luke 1:68-75; Luke 4:16-30).

v. 23 VINDICATION: The great planets and heavenly bodies are used by the prophets time and again to symbolize cataclysmic changes or portents to be experienced by man during the progress of history. See our comments in *Minor Prophets*, College Press, on Joel 2:31; 3:15. See also Isaiah’s use of the same terminology in connection with the downfall of babylon, Isaiah 13:9-10, and the symbolic language of the Revelation, chapters 6:12 and 8:12.

Here in 24:23, Isaiah portrays God’s triumph over the world at the accomplishment of redemption in Christ as so exceedingly glorious the sun and moon will pale into insignificant shame in comparison with His glory! No created thing in this universe, no matter how magnificent or majestic, can ever be compared with the glory of redemption’s accomplishment and the reign of God in His kingdom finally established. As C. S. Lewis once said, Even the glory of the future heavens and earth will not compare with the glory that is in us. It is not changed circumstances that will so much constitute a glorified existence as changed people. And when Jehovah reigns in Zion (the church, Heb. 12:22ff) people are changed and glorified! Of course, changed people eagerly long for changed circumstances where they, in their changed natures, may serve the Lord without pain, frustration, and death. But right now those who are overcoming the world by their faith and are “beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another”; (II Cor. 3:18). God reigning in Zion is a Messianic term (see our comments in *Minor Prophets*, College Press, Obadiah, verse 17). God is going to reign in Jerusalem when the ark of the covenant is no longer “remembered or missed” (Jer. 3:15-18). That must be when the New Covenant is instituted!

## QUIZ

1. How are these verses a continuation of the ideas in the beginning of the 24th chapter?
2. Why is God going to open the windows on high?
3. How do these verses portray the inescapability of God's judgments?
4. What is probably meant by the "violent shaking" of the earth?
5. What other O.T. prophet may be used in comparison here?
6. When did God "visit" the "host on high" and shut them up in prison?
7. How are heavenly bodies used symbolically by the prophets?

## B. JUBILEE BY JUDAH, CHAPTER 25

## 1. JUBILATION FOR JEHOVAH'S POWER

TEXT: 25:1-5

- 1 O Jehovah, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth.
- 2 For thou hast made of a city a heap, of a fortified city a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.
- 3 Therefore shall a strong people glorify thee; a city of terrible nations shall fear thee.
- 4 For thou has been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.
- 5 As the heat in a dry place wilt thou bring down the noise of strangers; as the heat by the shade of a cloud, the song of the terrible shall be brought low.