

Isaiah 24 - The Little Apocalypse of Isaiah: The Great Tribulation

I. Prophecies of condemnation (Is 1:1–35:10)

(3) Condemnation of the world (Is 24:1–35:10)

(A) Tribulation and kingdom: Little Apocalypse (Is 24:1–27:13)

(a) Universal judgment (24:1-20)

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Isaiah's "Little Apocalypse"

The "Little Apocalypse" follows a major section on the judgment of specific Gentile nations in Is 13-23. The emphasis of God's end-time judgment shifts from individual Gentile nations to the entire earth. Similar images of destruction, death, and ruin were used to describe the demise of individual cities and nations, but now one finds a climactic curse on all humanity and the whole earth.

The only correlating section of the OT may be Zech 12-14. Both sections are thoroughly eschatological and are clearly prophecies about the end times, not a reference to near events in Isaiah's day. Much of what is said in Revelation is an expansion of these four chapters, particularly Is 24-25. In fact, careful verse-by-verse study of Is 24-27 shows that it follows the same basic outline contained (in more detail) in Revelation.

The purpose of the Lord's end-time judgment that will take place during the Tribulation is said to be retributive for the sin the inhabitants of the earth (that is "earth dwellers") have committed. The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left (Is 24:5-6).

Isaiah 24

(3) Condemnation of the world (Is 24:1–35:10)

(A) Tribulation and kingdom: Little Apocalypse (Is 24:1–27:13)

(a) Universal judgment (24:1-20)

(i) Divine judgment on the entire earth (24:1-13)

1 Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, twists its surface, and scatters its inhabitants.

1 Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants.

1 "Watch out! The LORD is about to depopulate the land and devastate it; he will turn it upside down and scatter its inhabitants.

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

- "Behold" - whenever Isaiah uses this word, he is referring to something future

- Isaiah describes a future worldwide judgment from God over the entire earth

— This verse gives four results from this judgment: He will make the earth "waste"; He will "devastate it"; He will "twist it" (turn it upside down [ISV, KJV]); and, He will "scatter its inhabitants"

2 And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the female servant like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor.

2 And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor.

2 It will be the same for the lay people as for priests, the same for servants as for their masters, for female servants as for their mistresses, for buyers as for sellers, for lenders as for borrowers, and for creditors as for debtors.

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.

- The extent of judgment will be so universal that there will be an obliteration of all social and economic class distinctions

— Isaiah lists six pairs of opposites, all of which suffer greatly: the first three pairs are social classes: people, priest; servant, master; mistress, maid.

— The next three pairs are economic classes: buyer, seller; creditor, debtor; taker of interest, giver of interest

3 The earth will be completely laid waste and completely plundered, for the LORD has spoken this word.

3 The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the LORD has spoken this word.

3 The earth will be utterly depopulated and completely laid waste — for the LORD has spoken this message.

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

- The Hebrew translation is more emphatic than most English translations of this verse

- Because God has spoken it, this will be make certain that these events will come to pass

4 The earth dries up *and* crumbles away, **themainland** dries out *and* crumbles away, the **exalted of the people** of the earth dwindle.

4 The earth mourns *and* withers, the world fades *and* withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away.

4 "The earth dries up and withers; the world languishes and fades away; heaven fades away, along with the earth.

4 The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

- "...the mainland" - the inhabited earth

- "...exalted of the people" - the upper socio-economic classes

After abruptly spelling out this massive, universal judgment that will affect all socio-economic classes, v5-6 give the reason God sends this judgment.

5 The earth is also defiled by its inhabitants, for they violated laws, altered statutes, *and* broke the everlasting covenant.

5 The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, **broke the everlasting covenant**.

5 The earth lies defiled beneath its inhabitants; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant.

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

- The cause of this judgment is the disobedience of the people of the earth

- "...broke" - the Hebrew word means to frustrate the intent of the agreement.

— The Father and the Son have done Their part and kept Their word, but the people of Earth refused to accept its provisions and be saved. It's this disobedience that will ultimately bring God's judgment, because He offers no other provision for their escape.

- "...everlasting covenant" - the agreement whereby the Son (Jesus) agreed to die for our sins and in exchange the Father (God) agreed to forgive us

- "Everlasting covenant" is used 16x in the OT; could not refer and Scripture never applies it to the Mosaic Covenant
- Mankind is not party to this agreement, we are only its beneficiaries
- Some [Fruchtenbaum] view this as the Noahic Covenant

6 Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live on it suffer for their guilt. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth **decrease in number**, and few people are left.

6 Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.

6 Therefore the curse keeps on consuming, and its inhabitants are declared guilty. Furthermore, the inhabitants of earth are ablaze, and few people are left.

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.

- Deut 28:15; 29:19; Lev 26:14; Rom 1:18—3:20; Zech 5:3; Is 1:31; 5:24; 9:18; 10:16-17; 29:6; 30:27; Cf. 2 Peter 3:6-7
- "...decrease in number" - God promised Noah that He would never destroy the earth again with a flood; these judgments are with fire
- Many of the judgments in Revelation are with fire. Fire will be a major means that God will use to destroy humanity in the Tribulation (2 Peter 3:10-12, see notes there).

In v7-9, all sources of joy and gladness will be cut off: wine is removed (v7), music is removed (v8), and whatever is left becomes bitter and unenjoyable (v9).

7 The new wine mourns, The vine decays, All the joyful-hearted sigh.

7 The new wine mourns, The vine decays, All the merry-hearted sigh.

7 The new wine evaporates; the vine and the oil dry up; all the merrymakers groan.

7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh.

8 The joy of tambourines ceases, The noise of revelers stops, The joy of the harp ceases.

8 The gaiety of tambourines ceases, The noise of revelers stops, The gaiety of the harp ceases.

8 "The celebrations of the tambourine have ended, the noise of the jubilant has stopped, and the mirth that the harp produces has ended.

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

9 They do not drink wine with song; Intoxicating drink is bitter to those who drink it.

9 They do not drink wine with song; Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.

9 No longer do they drink wine accompanied by singing; even beer tastes bitter to those who drink it.

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

10 **The city of chaos** is broken down; Every house is shut up so that no one may enter.

10 The city of chaos is broken down; Every house is shut up so that none may enter.

10 The chaotic city lies broken down; every house is closed up so that no one can enter them.

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

- "The city of chaos" - Babylon; "the" points to a specific city

— The city of Babylon will be rebuilt by the Antichrist during the Tribulation to become the world capital

— As a result of God's judgment, Babylon will become a city of desolation. It will be so destroyed that it will be inaccessible because the ruins and debris will be blocking entrance.

11 There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine; All joy turns to gloom. The joy of the earth is banished.

11 There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine; All joy turns to gloom. The gaiety of the earth is banished.

11 There is an outcry in the streets over wine; all cheer turns to gloom; the fun times of the earth are banished.

11 There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.

12 Desolation is left in the city And the gate is battered to ruins.

12 Desolation is left in the city And the gate is battered to ruins.

12 Desolation remains in the city whose gates lie battered into ruins.

12 In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

13 For so it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, As the shaking of an olive tree, As the gleanings when the grape harvest is over.

13 For thus it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, As the shaking of an olive tree, As the gleanings when the grape harvest is over.

13 So it will be on the earth and among the nations— as when an olive tree is beaten, or as gleanings when the grape harvest has ended."

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.

- What is true of Babylon individually will also be true of the entire world in general: judgment will be worldwide

(ii) Believing remnant to glorify God (24:14-16)

14 They raise their voices, they shout for joy; They cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the LORD.

14 They raise their voices, they shout for joy; They cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the LORD.

14 "They raise their voices; they shout for joy; from the west they shout aloud over the LORD's majesty.

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

- Shouts of praise to God come from all directions: here, from the west

15 Therefore glorify the LORD in the east, The name of the LORD, the God of Israel, In the coastlands of the sea.

15 Therefore glorify the LORD in the east, The name of the LORD, the God of Israel, In the coastlands of the sea.

15 Therefore, you in the east, give glory to the LORD! You in the coastlands of the sea, give glory to the name of the LORD God of Israel!

15 Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

- Shouts of praise from the east...

16 From the ends of the earth we hear songs: "Glory to the Righteous One," But I say, "I am finished! I am finished! Woe to me! The treacherous deal treacherously, And the treacherous deal very treacherously."

16 From the ends of the earth we hear songs, "Glory to the Righteous One," But I say, "Woe to me! Woe to me! Alas for me! The treacherous deal treacherously, And the treacherous deal very treacherously."

16 From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise: 'Glory to the Righteous One!' "But I say, 'I am pining away, I'm pining away. How terrible things are for me! For treacherous people betray— treacherous people are betraying with treachery!'"

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.

- In the midst of massive judgment during the Tribulation and the complete removal of everything that brings man joy, there is a picture of worldwide glorification of God's name

- Those who are glorifying God during this time of massive judgment are Gentile and Jewish believers (Tribulation Saints) who have survived
- Tribulation Saints will be the only ones on Earth who understand what's going on. They will see God's righteousness in these judgments and will praise Him for them.
- In the second part of the verse, Isaiah is caught up in this vision and becomes a participant
- The point of these phrases is that, although there are many who are praising God's name, there is judgment nonetheless

Correlation with Rev 6-7

Isaiah does not provide the details, but interestingly Rev 7 follows the same outline as Is 24. Rev 6 describes the Seal judgments, which bring massive destruction of the earth's surface and population. Is 24:1-13 spells out judgments in general terms that correspond to Rev 6. In Rev 7:1-8 there is a group of people glorifying God's name: the 144,000 Jews. Rev 7:9-17 records that myriads of Gentiles are saved by the preaching of those 144,000 Jews, and they glorify God's name. Is 24:14-16a describes the glorification of God's name corresponding to Rev 7.

In Rev 8-9, John describes the next series of judgments, the Trumpet judgments. Is 24:16b-20 describes the devastation of the earth that corresponds to the judgments of Rev 8-9. These correlations between Isaiah and Revelation is why Is 24-27 is called Isaiah's "Little Apocalypse."

(iii) Terror of unbelievers (24:17-20)

- 17 Terror and pit and snare Confront you, you inhabitant of the earth.
- 17 Terror and pit and snare Confront you, O inhabitant of the earth.
- 17 "Terror and pit and snare are coming in your direction, you inhabitants of the earth!
- 17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.
- 18 Then it will be that the one who flees the sound of terror will fall into the pit, And the one who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare; For **the windows above are opened**, and the foundations of the earth shake.
- 18 Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit, And he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare; For the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake.
- 18 Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit, and whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. For the windows of judgment from above are opened, and the foundations of the earth are shaken.

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.

- Emphasizes the inescapableness of the judgments

- "...the windows above are opened" - an allusion to the Flood (Cf. Gen 7:11; 8:2); refers to the universality of the judgments

— Just as the Flood was a judgment on the whole earth, destroying masses of humanity and leaving only a small remnant, the Tribulation will also be a universal judgment on the entire earth, causing massive destruction of the earth's population, leaving only a minority or remnant alive.

— Revelation is more specific on the extent of destruction: once the Tribulation runs its course, between two-thirds and three-quarters of the earth's surface and population will be destroyed.

19 The earth is broken apart, The earth is split through, The earth is shaken violently.

19 The earth is broken asunder, The earth is split through, The earth is shaken violently.

19 The earth is utterly shattered, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken.

19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.

- Again, the Hebrew text is more emphatic than most English translations

20 The earth trembles like a heavy drinker And sways like a hut, For **its wrongdoing is heavy upon it**, And it will fall, never to rise again.

20 The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard And it totters like a shack, For its transgression is heavy upon it, And it will fall, never to rise again.

20 The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies so heavy upon it, that it falls, never to rise again.

20 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.

- This verse is scary...the earth is so riddled with judgment that it can't even remain on its axis. It's teetering and tottering around like a drunk man, unable to follow a straight course.

- Jesus said that the judgments of the Great Tribulation will exceed anything the world has ever seen or will see again (Matt 24:21)

— When it's over, no building will be left standing, every mountain will have fallen.

Earthquakes will open up huge gaps in the surface of the Earth.

- "...its wrongdoing is heavy upon it" - the purpose of the judgments

— The end product is that God's purpose is fulfilled: its "transgression" will fall, never to rise again

(iv) God's reign (24:21-23)

(a) Over spiritual powers (24:21a)

(b) Of earthly Powers (24:21b-22)

21 So it will happen on that day, That the LORD will punish the *rebellious* angels of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth.

21 So it will happen in that day, That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth.

21 "And it will come about at that time, the LORD will punish the armies of the exalted ones in the heavens, and the rulers of the earth on earth.

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.

- Describes the judgment of wicked angels and men. When the Tribulation ends, two groups will be judged: fallen angelic beings (demons), and kings (humanity in general)

22 They will be gathered together *Like* prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they *will* be punished.

22 They will be gathered together *Like* prisoners in the **dungeon**, And will be confined in **prison**; And **after many days** they *will* be punished.

22 They will be herded together into the Pit; they will be shut up in prison, and after many days they will be punished.

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.

- "...dungeon" - "the pit" [KJV, ISV]; refers to Hell, where fallen, unregenerated, unsaved humanity will be placed after the Second Coming (Matt 25:31-46; Joel 3:1-3)

- "...prison" - the abyss, a section of Sheol/Hades that is the temporary place of confinement for fallen angels

— Satan will also be confined to the abyss at the Second Coming (Rev 20:1-3)

— "...after many days" - an allusion to the 1000-year messianic kingdom

— After the messianic kingdom, they will all stand before the Great White Throne judgment

(c) Over Israel (24:23)

23 Then the moon will be ashamed and the sun be put to shame, For the LORD of armies will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And *His* glory will be before His elders.

23 Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And *His* glory will be before His elders.

23 Then the moon will be embarrassed and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of the Heavenly Armies will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem; and in the presence of its

elders there will be glory."

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.

- After these judgments, the kingdom will be inaugurated. Because God Himself will rule from Jerusalem, the Shekinah Glory will outshine both the sun and the moon, and will be reflected by "His elders" (the Church? 24 Elders?)