

Introduction

A. My Purposes for Teaching This Section

1. It is a passage chosen to be the haftarah for Leviticus 25. Leviticus 25 speaks about the good things that will happen in the future, especially when Shanah Shimittah and Shanat Yovel are practicing fully. But what about until then? What does the future hold? That is the thrust of this haftarah.
2. It is a passage that is often ignored. I could not resist the challenge of trying to understand it!
3. Usually I try to be very positive, teaching only passages that seem very uplifting. I usually like to avoid teaching about God's future judgment. This passage teaches us that we cannot always avoid that!
4. But, more to the point — the passage contains an important message for today. It is a time when people think they can say anything and do anything they please, ignoring God and His Word in the process. This passage is about divine judgment where we are warned to heed the authority of the Holy One.
5. There will be a reckoning, a judgment, a time when God will hold rebellious one accountable — and we must be warned about it.

B. Isaiah's Context

1. Isaiah is indeed speaking about the future. He is also speaking about the nations outside of Isreal.
2. This is a section of future prophecy similar to other future prophetic sections in the rest of the Bible: judgements on the whole earth, traumatic physical changes on the earth, judgement against Israel's enemies, defeat of sin and death, promises of peace and security for Israel and God's people.
3. Isaiah moves from the particulars of chapters 13–23 to the general entire earth in 24–27. In chapters 13–23, God is the sovereign who acts on the stage of history. It is not He who reacts to the nations — the nations respond to Him. God did not just “allow,” He acted.
4. Another helpful summary of where we are:
 - Chapters 13–23:** The glory of the nations is nothing.
 - Chapters 13–14:** The gory of the nations equals nothing.
 - Chapters 14–18:** The scheming of the nations equals nothing.
 - Chapters 19–20:** The wisdom of the world equals nothing.
 - Chapter 21:** The vision of this nation equals nothing.
 - Chapter 23:** The wealth of the nations equals nothing.

If this is all true, Israel, then don't trust the nations!

CHAPTER 24

I. The Prediction of Judgment 24:1–4

- A. A summary of the chapter as a whole: In the coming destruction God will destroy the social and natural orders. **24:1–3**
- B. Total destruction of the whole earth
 - 1. (אָרֶץ) is used 16x in chapter 24.
 - 2. It is truly speaking about judgment for the whole earth.
The word, (תָּבֵל), is used in **24:4** to denote firm (dry) land or mainland, continent.
- C. In the first few verses: Isaiah wants the reader to feel like and to see that the teeming earth, when God is finished judgment it, will be as an abandoned heap.
 - It is not so much of a logical progression as a verbal image, an impression of total desolation and destruction that Isaiah is presenting.
- D. The earth is pictured like one big city of people: **24:10, 12; 25:2**
- E. Despite the many distinctions that occur in **24:2**, these verses are very general in character. A universal judgment on the earth is proclaimed, affecting all its inhabitants, no matter what their status.
- F. God's judgments would be completely indiscriminate, for it would affect all strata of society. The religious, social, and economic relationships of human life would not restrain it (**24:2**). The affirmation that God has spoken (**24:3**) underlines the certainty of the judgments predicted. They are so terrifying and so universal that such assurance is needed. We need to see that the true and living God carries out his judgments on moral principles, not as the expression of an arbitrary will.

II. The Reasons for the Judgments 24:5

- A. **The People's Sin and Covenant Unfaithfulness**
 - 1. The "Covenant" could be the implicit covenant between Creator and creature.
 - 2. The "Covenant" could be the Noahide covenant. See Genesis 9:16 for the same phrase.
 - 3. The "Covenant" could be God's Torah. **24:5**
The mention of a violation of laws (torahs, תּוֹרָה) and *huk* (חֹק).
- B. The sin is so bad; it pollutes the earth. This is not talking about environmental problems, though they might be included in that. It is much broader. The pollutant is human sin.
- C. These verses are characterized by a strong moral tone. The true and living God carries out His judgments on moral principles, not as the expression of an arbitrary will. Modern society is becoming more concerned about the physical pollution of our environment. Isaiah here dealt with the even more tragic and urgent matter of moral pollution, which is as widespread and serious today as it was in the eighth century BCE.
- D. The earth is under a curse (**24:6**). It is not some kind of a magical decree using a certain incantation of words. The word "curse" denotes the results of covenant unfaithfulness spoken of in the Torah.
- E. All mankind is facing this judgment. Remember **Romans 1:18–19**

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”

III. The Results of God’s Judgments 24:6–11, 23

- A. Although this judgment is universal, it appears to be carried out on earth, like many of the judgments in the Book of Revelation; and there will be a remnant of mankind surviving it. **24:7–9**

B. **The “City” 24:10–13**

Much has been written about the various references to “the city” in chapters 24–27 (see esp. 25:2–3; 26:5; 27:10–11). There have been many attempts to identify it as especially Jerusalem or Babylon or an unnamed Moabite city (cf. 25:10). These attempts are probably all on the wrong track. Clements (*Isaiah 1–39*, in loc.) has well commented:

“There is a complete lack of any specific national reference and none of the activities which are pursued within the city differentiate it in any special way. It can best be understood, therefore, as a pictorial description of the body of organized human society, a type of “Vanity Fair,” which is to be subjected to the divine judgment. When God asserts His will in judgment He will judge the existing human order, so that in a sense every city will be brought to chaos.”

- C. **24:13** seems to equate the “city” with the entire earth. — We are all connected. And it seems very appropriate to speak in these terms especially in light of the prevailing thinking in today’s globalist world.
- D. No joy but silence and signs in the heavens. There will be judgment for kings on earth and even for the heavenly hosts that rebelled against the Lord.
- E. The city is in ruins, and the entrances to all its standing houses are blocked. Perhaps this is due to the presence of much rubble in the streets, or else it is because a spirit of fear has gripped the hearts of its remaining inhabitants. They secure themselves within their houses, hoping they will be safe from judgment. Those still out in the streets are overtaken by a spirit of gloom, symbolized by the lack of wine. **24:10, 12**
- F. **24:21–22** — The earth and its people will look like an olive orchard or a vineyard after the harvest: Only a few stray handfuls will remain. This is what happens to a world that refuses to acknowledge God. **24:13**

IV. The Response to God’s Judgments 24:13–16

- A. **24:14** — “The West” could easily be translated “from the sea”. In biblical imagery, the sea is often associated with the gentile nations, sometime those opposed to Israel. In this case, we see that there has been a great judgment, but God has not made a full end to the earth’s population. Those who remain lift up their voices in grateful praise to him (**24:14**).
- B. **24:15** — The prophet heard the song first of all in the west. He called on those in the east to blend their voices also in harmony of praise to the Lord. As a result, the praises of the God of Israel ascend on all sides. Perhaps the conversion of Egypt and Assyria (19:23–25) can be taken as an earnest or a symbol of this.

- C. **24:16** — But the prophet cannot yet join in because he is too caught up in the horror of it all.

V. The Outworking of God's Judgments 24:21–23

A. The Rebellious will be visited with Judgment 24:21

Paked (פקד) has to do with visiting someone, especially by delivering punishment. The base meaning of *paked* is 'to pay attention to' and, arising from this, to weigh the issues and take appropriate action. Hence the verb must always be judged contextually: here, a "visitation of judgment".

B. The Recipients of the Judgment 24:21

1. The term *seva* (שׁבּא) has to do with "powers." It is sometimes used of the heavenly bodies (34:4; 40:26; 45:12) and sometimes of the angelic armies (1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 18:18). Sometimes it is used to speak of armies.
2. This judgment is for kings on earth and even for the heavenly hosts that rebelled against the Lord. **24:21–22**

C. How They will be Judged 24:22

1. They will be *gathered together*.
 - Some of them were probably enemies or rivals. In the end they will be lumped together sharing the same fate.
2. They will be *imprisoned*.
 - a. A prison was often just a hole in the ground, as indicated by the Hebrew term "*bor* (בּוֹר)"
 - b. This passage reminds us of:
2 Peter 2:4
"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell [*tartarus*] and committed them to pits of darkness, held for judgment..."
3. *Punishment*, after many days
Jude 6
"And angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling place, *these* He has kept in eternal restraints under darkness for the judgment of the great day..."

We are not given any details about the nature of the punishment. It is significant enough to know that whatever it is it should be avoided at all costs.

D. When will all of this take place?

1. *be yom hahu* (בּיּוֹם הַהוּא) 24:21

A common prophetic term designating an unspecified period of time in the future. Remember that the prophets did not think chronologically when it came to predictions — and neither should we!

2. *me rov hamim* (מֵרׁוֹב יָמִים) 24:22

"After many days..."

Again, very general.

Again, no specified time other than saying that the retribution will take place after the offenders are placed into prison. The words "*many days*" remove the date from human reckoning and impose the discipline of patience and the exercise of expectancy

3. A Time in the Future — when the Lord will reign in Jerusalem! 24:23
“Will Reign”

Rather than other nations forcing people, especially Israel to submit to them, thereby abusing people in the process, someday in the future, the true supreme authority will be king in Jerusalem

“The Sun” and “the Moon”

This is poetically expressing the immeasurable glory that will be seen in Jerusalem from the lord’s presence. But bright as the sun and moon are they will (so to say) hang their heads in shame at being such poor things by comparison. Moreover, the prophet pictured the two great heavenly bodies hiding their lights in shame when the Lord exercises direct rule in Jerusalem. All other glory is his gift and simply a reflection of his glory, and one day it will be seen that it can be no rival to him.

4. Future Glory

Calvin (in loc.) says, “Then only does God receive his just rights, and the honour due to Him, when all creatures are placed in subjection, and He alone shines before our eyes.”