

The Book of Isaiah, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: The Lord's Judgment of the Whole Earth

Isaiah 24:1–27:13

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Isaiah 24–27 is one of the most theologically rich and most abused sections of the book. Your aim is to help the class hold together the two notes Isaiah keeps sounding: God genuinely judges the whole earth for sin, and God genuinely saves and even abolishes death for His people. Resist the temptation to soften the judgment or to over-spiritualize the comfort. Both are real. The earth really does reel; God really does swallow up death. Lead the class to see that the only safe place when everything shakes is inside the salvation God Himself provides, pictured as a strong city and a mountain feast.

This lesson is doctrinally sensitive and must be handled with care. Some teach that the feast on the mountain (25:6–9), the resurrection language (26:19), and the regathering by trumpet (27:13) describe a future, earthly, political kingdom restored to national Israel. Scripture itself reads them differently. Paul applies 25:8 directly to the bodily resurrection at Christ's coming (1 Corinthians 15:54), and John applies the wiping away of tears and the end of death to the eternal state (Revelation 21:4). The mountain of the LORD where the nations gather is fulfilled as believers come to Mount Zion, the church, the city of the living God (Hebrews 12:22–24), and the trumpet-gathering is the gospel ingathering of the scattered into Christ. Keep the class anchored in how the New Testament itself reads Isaiah, so the glorious hope here is Christ-centered and not redirected into earthly nationalism.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Isaiah 24:1–6 the LORD judges the whole earth, and verse 5 explains why: "The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant." What does this teach us about God's relationship to the entire world, not just to Israel, and about the seriousness of sin? Support your answer from the verses.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Isaiah 24 opens with a thunderclap. The prophet has spent chapters 13–23 pronouncing oracles against individual nations. Now the scope widens to take in "the earth" itself, a word that rings out again and again in this chapter. God will empty it, twist its surface, and scatter its inhabitants. This is creation-wide language, deliberately echoing the flood and even the curse of Eden. The God of Israel is not a tribal deity with a small territory. He is Maker and Judge of all.

Verse 2 levels every social distinction: priest like people, master like servant, buyer like seller, lender like borrower. Sin and accountability run straight through every rank of society. No office, no wealth, no religious standing buys an exemption. This is one of the great equalizing truths of Scripture, and it confronts every human attempt to hide behind status.

Verse 5 gives the reason for the judgment: “The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.” Notice that this is the whole earth, not merely covenant Israel. There is a moral order woven into creation that all people are accountable to, what Paul later calls the law written on the heart (Romans 2:14–15). When humanity tramples it, the earth itself groans.

The chapter is not all darkness. Verses 14–16 catch the sound of singing rising “from the ends of the earth,” glory to the Righteous One. Even amid global judgment a remnant lifts its voice. Isaiah models the honesty of faith: he hears the song and yet also cries, “I waste away,” because the treacherous still deal treacherously. Hope and lament can occupy the same heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s moral authority is universal, not limited to Israel; all people everywhere are accountable to Him (Acts 17:30–31).
- Personal accountability for sin: the judgment falls on transgression, not on inherited status or position (Ezekiel 18:20).
- There is a moral order built into creation that even those without Scripture are answerable to (Romans 2:14–15).
- Religious office and social rank do not exempt anyone from God’s reckoning (Isaiah 24:2).
- Faith can hold genuine hope and honest lament together at the same time (Isaiah 24:16).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter that Isaiah widens the judgment from named nations to “the whole earth”? What does that say about the God we worship?
- Verse 2 says the judgment falls the same on priest and people. Where do we quietly assume our religious involvement gives us a pass?
- Isaiah both sings and grieves in the same passage. Is your faith honest enough to do both? What does it look like to lament and worship together?

Question 2

Student Question:

Verse 24:2 says the judgment falls the same on priest and people, master and slave, buyer and seller, rich and poor. When have you been tempted to think your position, religion, or respectability would exempt you from accountability before God? How does this verse confront that?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 24:2 deserves its own attention because it is so easy to miss and so searching when you see it. Isaiah lists pairs of people who normally stand on opposite sides of a transaction or a hierarchy, and he says the judgment treats them identically. The priest does not fare better than the layman. The creditor does not fare better than the debtor. Before God the playing field is utterly level.

This is profoundly humbling for religious people. In Isaiah's day the priest could have assumed his role protected him. In our day a faithful church member can drift into assuming that attendance, baptism long ago, or a respectable reputation forms a kind of insurance against accountability. Isaiah says no. God sees the heart, not the resume.

The flip side is comforting for the lowly. The servant and the poor are not at a disadvantage before God. The same God who will not be impressed by status will also not despise the humble. Accountability that is no respecter of persons is also mercy that is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- No human position, religious or social, buys exemption from accountability to God (Isaiah 24:2).
- Self-application: religious familiarity can breed a false sense of immunity.
- God shows no partiality, which is both sobering for the proud and freeing for the lowly (Acts 10:34-35).
- True security comes from a right relationship with God, never from rank or reputation.

Discussion Prompts

- Be honest: in what area of life do you quietly assume your standing protects you from consequences?
- How does it change your daily walk to know God is no respecter of persons, in both judgment and mercy?
- If God sees the heart and not the resume, what would He find driving your service to Him this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

In Isaiah 25:1-5 the prophet bursts into a song of praise, calling God "a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress." Why does Isaiah respond to God's judgments with worship rather than only fear? What does this teach us about how to read God's acts of judgment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 25 turns abruptly to praise: "O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name." Isaiah does not merely tolerate God's judgments; he worships in response to them. He sees in the toppling of the fortified city not random destruction but "plans formed of old, faithful and sure." Faith reads God's hard acts as the careful working out of an ancient, trustworthy purpose.

Verses 4-5 give us a tender image right in the middle of the thunder: God is "a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the

heat.” The same storm that judges the ruthless is the shelter that protects the needy. Where you stand in relation to God determines whether His power feels like a storm or a refuge.

Notice who God defends: the poor and the needy. Throughout Isaiah, God’s heart bends toward those the world overlooks. The proud city is brought low precisely so that the lowly can be lifted up. This is the same reversal Mary would later sing in the Magnificat (Luke 1:51–53).

Worship like Isaiah’s is not naive. He knows the world is full of ruthless nations. But he chooses to fix his praise on the character of God revealed in His acts. Praise is not a denial of reality; it is a deeper reading of reality, with God at the center.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s judgments flow from “plans formed of old, faithful and sure,” not from caprice (Isaiah 25:1).
- The same divine power is storm to the ruthless and shelter to the needy (Isaiah 25:4–5).
- God’s particular care for the poor and overlooked runs all through Scripture (Luke 1:51–53).
- Worship is a faithful, clear-eyed reading of reality with God at the center, not denial.
- Right standing with God determines whether His power is experienced as threat or refuge.

Discussion Prompts

- Isaiah responds to judgment with praise. What would it take for you to worship God even in seasons you do not understand?
- Have you experienced God as a shelter from the storm? Tell the story.
- God defends the poor and needy. How should that shape the way our congregation treats the overlooked?

Question 4

Student Question:

Isaiah 25:4 says God is “a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.” Describe a season when God proved to be exactly that kind of shelter for you. What did you learn about Him that you did not know before the storm came?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 25:4 is worth lingering over because it pictures God in the most personal, protective terms: shelter, shade, refuge. Anyone who has been caught outside in a violent storm, or worked under a brutal sun, knows in their body how desperately you long for cover. Isaiah says God Himself is that cover for those who run to Him.

The image is not of God removing every storm but of God being the shelter within it. The needy are not promised a life without distress; they are promised a stronghold in the midst of distress. This is the realistic comfort the Bible offers: not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God in it.

This connects directly to the New Testament invitation of Jesus: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The shade Isaiah describes is finally found in a Person. To know Christ is to have moved inside the shelter.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God promises His presence in the storm, not always the removal of the storm (Isaiah 25:4).
- Self-application: where are you running for shelter when distress comes?
- The shelter Isaiah describes finds its fullest expression in Christ's invitation to rest (Matthew 11:28).
- Realistic biblical comfort centers on God's presence, not on a trouble-free life.

Discussion Prompts

- When the heat and the storm came, where did you actually run first? What does that reveal?
- How is God's promise of shelter-in-the-storm different from a promise of no storms? Why does that matter?
- What is one practical way you can step further "inside the shelter" of Christ this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Isaiah 26:1-4 describes a "strong city" whose walls are salvation, into which the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter, and it promises "perfect peace" to the steadfast mind. In light of the whole Bible, what and where is this strong city of salvation, and how does one enter it (consider Hebrews 12:22-24 and Philippians 4:6-7)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Isaiah 26 opens with a song to be sung "in the land of Judah": "We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks." In an age of literal fortifications, the prophet says the real defense of God's people is not their stonework but God's salvation itself. The walls that matter are the saving acts of God.

The gates of this city open only to "the righteous nation that keeps faith." Entrance is not by ethnicity or military strength but by trusting, faithful relationship with God. This points forward to the city believers come to in Christ, Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:22-24), entered through faith expressed in obedience to the gospel.

Then comes one of the most beloved promises in Scripture: "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (26:3). The Hebrew is literally "peace, peace," a doubling for emphasis, complete and settled peace. And the condition is a mind that is "stayed," leaned, propped, fixed on God. Peace is not the absence of trouble; it is the result of where the mind rests.

Verse 4 grounds it all: “Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.” The contrast with the fortified city of the proud, brought down to the dust later in the chapter, could not be sharper. Build your life on the everlasting Rock and you cannot be moved.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- True security is God’s salvation, not human fortification (Isaiah 26:1).
- Entrance into God’s city is by faith that keeps covenant, not by birth or might (Isaiah 26:2).
- The strong city is fulfilled in Mount Zion, the church, entered through the gospel (Hebrews 12:22–24).
- Perfect peace is tied directly to where the mind is fixed (Isaiah 26:3).
- Peace is not the absence of trouble but the fruit of a mind stayed on the everlasting Rock (Isaiah 26:4).

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the city’s walls are “salvation”? How does that reframe what makes us secure?
- Isaiah 26:3 ties peace to a mind “stayed” on God. What does an unstayed, anxious mind tend to fix on instead?
- How is the “strong city” of Isaiah fulfilled for us in Christ and His church (Hebrews 12:22–24)?

Question 6

Student Question:

Verse 26:8 says, “In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.” What does it look like, practically, to “wait for” the Lord when His timing is slower than you want? Where are you being asked to wait right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 26:8 captures the posture of faith between God’s promise and its fulfillment: “In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.” Waiting is not passive. It is walking the path God lays out while longing for Him, keeping His name as the desire of the soul.

Verse 9 deepens this: “My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.” The night is the time of darkness and uncertainty, and it is precisely then that the believer’s longing for God intensifies. Waiting in the dark is one of the truest tests of where our affections lie.

This kind of waiting runs against everything our impatient culture trains into us. We want resolution now. Isaiah models a soul that can wait, not because waiting is easy, but because the One waited for is worth it. The same theme returns in 40:31, those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength.

Waiting is not wasted time. Verse 9 says that “when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.” Even the seasons of delay and difficulty are doing God’s teaching work in us and in the watching world.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Biblical waiting is active: walking God’s path while longing for Him (Isaiah 26:8).
- Self-application: the night season tests where our deepest desires really lie (Isaiah 26:9).
- Waiting on the Lord is countercultural in an impatient age (Isaiah 40:31).
- Seasons of waiting and difficulty are not wasted; God uses them to teach righteousness.

Discussion Prompts

- Where in your life right now is God asking you to wait? How are you handling it?
- Isaiah says his soul yearns for God “in the night.” What has darkness taught you about your own longings?
- How can our class encourage one another to wait well rather than rushing ahead of God?

Question 7

Student Question:

Isaiah 26:9–10 observes that “when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness,” yet “if favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness.” Why does God sometimes use hardship rather than only kindness to teach His people and the nations? How do you reconcile this with His goodness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 26:9–10 make a sobering observation about human nature: “when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness.” There is something in fallen humanity that often will not learn from kindness alone but must also be confronted by consequence.

This is not a denial of God’s goodness; it is an expression of it. A good physician sometimes prescribes a hard treatment. A good parent sometimes allows a painful consequence. God’s willingness to let His people and the nations feel the weight of sin is itself an act of mercy aimed at producing righteousness (Hebrews 12:10–11).

Verse 11 adds that the wicked “do not see” the LORD’s uplifted hand, but they will. There is a willful blindness in unrepentant sin, a refusal to read what God is plainly doing. Part of the discipline is meant to open eyes that have chosen not to see.

The pastoral application is delicate. We must not tell every suffering person that their hardship is punishment, for that is not always so (John 9:1–3). But we can affirm that God is able to use even hard providences to teach what comfort alone never could, and that this is consistent with His deep goodness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Human nature often resists learning from kindness alone (Isaiah 26:10).
- God's discipline is an expression of His goodness, not a contradiction of it (Hebrews 12:10–11).
- Unrepentant sin includes a willful refusal to see what God is doing (Isaiah 26:11).
- Not all suffering is punishment; pastoral care must avoid that simplistic conclusion (John 9:1–3).
- God can use hard providences to accomplish what comfort cannot.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think people often learn more from hardship than from ease? Have you found this true?
- How do we hold together God's goodness and His willingness to let us feel consequences?
- Why must we be careful not to label every person's suffering as God's punishment?

Question 8

Student Question:

Isaiah 26:12 confesses, "O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works." How does it change the way you live and serve when you really believe that even your good works are something God has worked in and through you, not achievements you produce on your own?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 26:12 is a quiet little confession with enormous weight: "O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works." The prophet acknowledges that even the good the people have accomplished was ultimately God's working in them. This guards against the pride that takes credit for what only grace made possible.

This anticipates the New Testament truth that we are "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10), and that it is God "who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Our obedience is real and required, yet it is enabled by God.

Verses 13–15 then look back over Judah's history, confessing that other lords had ruled over them, but only the LORD's name they would acknowledge. The dead tyrants who once oppressed them will not rise, but God has enlarged the nation and been glorified. Grace rewrites the story.

The practical fruit of 26:12 is humility joined to confidence. Because God works in us, we have confidence that our labor is not in vain. Because it is God who works, we have no ground for boasting. Both attitudes flow from the same verse.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even the believer's good works are ultimately God working in and through us (Isaiah 26:12).

- Obedience is genuinely required yet divinely enabled (Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10).
- This guards against both prideful self-credit and passive fatalism.
- Self-application: humility and confidence flow together from grace.
- Grace rewrites our history; old tyrants and old bondages need not define us (Isaiah 26:13–14).

Discussion Prompts

- How does it humble you to realize even your good works are God working in you?
- How does that same truth also give you confidence that your labor matters?
- Where are you tempted to take credit before God for something only grace made possible?

Question 9

Student Question:

Isaiah 25:6–9 promises a feast for all peoples on the mountain, declares that God “will swallow up death forever,” and “will wipe away tears from all faces,” and Isaiah 26:19 announces, “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.” Paul quotes 25:8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54 about the resurrection. Explain how these promises are fulfilled in Christ’s victory over death and in the gospel age and the eternal state, and why this is NOT a promise of a future earthly political kingdom. What hope does this give the Christian standing at a graveside?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal heart of the lesson, and it is glorious. Isaiah 25:6–9 pictures God preparing “for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,” on His mountain. Then comes the staggering promise: “he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples... He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces.” Death itself, the last enemy, will be devoured.

Isaiah 26:19 sounds the same trumpet from the resurrection side: “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!” This is not vague survival of the soul; it is bodily resurrection, the dust itself giving up its dead. Isaiah, centuries before the empty tomb, is shown the hope that Christ would secure.

How do we know these promises are fulfilled in Christ and not in a future earthly political kingdom for national Israel? Because the New Testament tells us so. Paul quotes Isaiah 25:8 directly in 1 Corinthians 15:54, applying it to the resurrection of believers at Christ’s coming: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” John echoes the wiping away of tears and the abolition of death in the eternal state (Revelation 21:4). The mountain feast for all peoples is the gospel banquet to which the nations are now called, the table of the Lord and the kingdom of Christ, fulfilled as believers come to Mount Zion, the church of the living God (Hebrews 12:22–24).

So this passage must not be redirected into earthly nationalism, a rebuilt temple, restored animal sacrifices, or a thousand-year reign. The kingdom was established at Pentecost (Acts 2), Christ reigns now, and death has already been decisively defeated in His resurrection, to be

finally abolished when He returns. The feast is for “all peoples,” Jew and Gentile together in one body (Ephesians 2:14–16), the true and spiritual Israel of God (Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6–8).

Stand at a graveside with this text and the comfort is overwhelming. The covering of grief that hangs over all peoples, God will swallow up. The tears, He will wipe away with His own hand. Death does not get the last word; God does. “It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us... let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (25:9).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God will “swallow up death forever,” fulfilled in Christ’s resurrection and the believer’s resurrection at His return (1 Corinthians 15:54).
- Isaiah 26:19 teaches bodily resurrection, not merely the survival of the soul.
- The mountain feast for all peoples is the gospel banquet, Jew and Gentile in one body (Ephesians 2:14–16).
- These promises are NOT a future earthly political kingdom, rebuilt temple, animal sacrifices, or thousand-year reign; the kingdom came at Pentecost and Christ reigns now (Acts 2).
- The wiping away of tears and the end of death reach their final form in the eternal state (Revelation 21:4).
- The strong city and holy mountain are fulfilled in Mount Zion, the church (Hebrews 12:22–24).
- This hope gives the Christian solid comfort at the graveside; death does not have the last word.

Discussion Prompts

- Paul quotes Isaiah 25:8 about the resurrection. How does it strengthen your faith to see the empty tomb already foreseen here?
- Why is it important to read the feast and the resurrection as fulfilled in Christ and the gospel age rather than as a future earthly political kingdom?
- What would it mean to truly believe, at the next funeral you attend, that God will swallow up death forever?

Question 10

Student Question:

Isaiah 27:13 pictures a great trumpet sounding and the scattered, the perishing ones driven out to far countries, being gathered to worship the LORD on the holy mountain. Name one specific way that, having seen God’s victory over death and His feast for all peoples, you will let Jesus reshape how you face your own fears, your grief, or someone you have given up praying for.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The section closes in Isaiah 27 with the image of God as the keeper of His vineyard, a tender reversal of the vineyard song of chapter 5 where the vineyard was destroyed. Now God says, “I,

the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it. Lest anyone punish it, I keep it night and day” (27:3). The God who judges is also the God who tends and protects His own.

Verse 27:13 sounds the climax: “And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.” The scattered and perishing are gathered home to worship. This is the great ingathering.

Read through the New Testament, this trumpet-gathering of the scattered to worship on the holy mountain is the gospel call going out to the nations, drawing the lost from every land into the church, the spiritual Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22). The same Jesus who said “I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32) is the one fulfilling Isaiah’s vision. The trumpet is the sound of the gospel summoning the perishing home.

And so the capstone of the lesson is invitational. Having seen God swallow up death, spread a feast for all peoples, and gather the scattered to worship, the question for us is personal. Will we let this reshape how we face our fears, our grief, and the people we have written off? The God who gathers the perishing is not finished. Neither should our prayers be.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God is the faithful keeper of His vineyard, a reversal of the judgment of Isaiah 5 (Isaiah 27:3).
- The trumpet-gathering of the scattered is fulfilled in the gospel ingathering of the nations into the church (Galatians 4:26).
- Christ draws all peoples to Himself; the spiritual Jerusalem is the church (John 12:32; Hebrews 12:22).
- The capstone is personal: letting God’s victory over death reshape our fears, grief, and prayers.
- The perishing are still being gathered, so our evangelism and our prayers should not give up.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the picture of God as the careful keeper of His vineyard comfort you about your own life?
- If the trumpet of 27:13 is the gospel gathering the scattered home, what is our role in sounding it?
- Name one specific fear, grief, or person God is asking you to surrender to Him in light of this lesson.