

The Book of Isaiah

Lesson 10: The Lord's Judgment of the Whole Earth -- Isaiah 24:1-27:13

Up to now Isaiah has moved nation by nation, country by country, naming Babylon and Moab and Tyre and Egypt one at a time. Then suddenly the camera pulls all the way back. In chapter 24 the prophet stops talking about this people or that city and lifts his eyes to take in the whole round earth at once. "Behold, the LORD will empty the earth and make it desolate." This is not a border dispute. This is the Maker of heaven and earth reckoning with the entire planet He made. If the earlier chapters were thunder rolling along the horizon, here the storm breaks directly overhead.

These four chapters, sometimes called the "Isaiah Apocalypse," swing back and forth between two notes like a heartbeat. There is the dark note of judgment, the earth staggering like a drunkard, the city of confusion broken down, the joy of the tambourine gone silent. And there is the bright note of deliverance, a feast of rich food on the mountain, a song sung in the land of Judah, the announcement that He will swallow up death forever. Both notes are true at once. The same God who shakes the earth is the God who spreads a table on it.

Listen closely and you will hear, woven through the trembling, some of the most hope-filled words in all the Old Testament. "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you." "Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise." "He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces." These are not vague poetry. These are the very words Paul reaches for when he writes about the empty tomb, and the words John hears again at the end of the Book of Revelation. Isaiah is looking down the long corridor of time and seeing what Jesus would do.

So as we open these chapters, do not let the shaking earth frighten you away from the steady God in the middle of it. The point of all this thunder is not to leave you afraid. It is to teach you where the only safe place is. When the whole earth reels, when the things people trusted in collapse, there is still a city with strong walls that God Himself appoints for salvation, and there is still a mountain where He invites the nations to a feast. Let us go and find out where to stand.

Group Discussion: Isaiah pictures the whole earth being shaken so that everything unstable is exposed and only what rests on God remains. What kinds of "earthquakes" (in a life, a family, or a culture) tend to reveal what people have really been trusting in? Share an example you have witnessed.

Personal Reflection: Isaiah 26:3 promises perfect peace to the one whose mind is "stayed" on God. Be honest with yourself: where does your mind actually go for security when you are afraid? What would it look like this week to keep your mind stayed on the Lord instead?

Read Isaiah 24:1-27:13

Study Questions

1. 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.
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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)?

6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: 1 Corinthians 15:50–57, Paul quotes Isaiah 25:8 to declare death swallowed up in Christ's resurrection; Revelation 21:1–4, God wiping away every tear and the end of death echoes Isaiah's feast and final hope; Philippians 4:6–7, the peace of God guarding the mind that turns to Him in prayer fulfills Isaiah 26:3; Hebrews 12:22–24, the believer has already come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God; Galatians 6:14–16, the Israel of God and the new creation in Christ.

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