

ISAIAH — LESSON TWELVE

ISAIAH 22-26:15

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Valley of Vision: Jerusalem

Vv. 1-14 – Rebuke of the People’s Spirit of Frivolity

Since chapter 13 Isaiah has been declaring God’s judgment upon the nations. That which he declares here is not upon the heathen, but upon his own city where his people reside. Why does he do it? Has he not declared from the beginning that if God’s people are going to live like heathens then they shall be treated the same as they.

In light of the reference to the “defenses of Judah” (22:8), “the city of David” (22:9), “the buildings of Jerusalem” (22:10), the “Old Pool” (22:11), and Hezekiah’s government officials Shebna (22:15) and Eliakim (22:20), this chapter about the “Valley of Visions” (22:1,5) must relate to God’s plan for Judah and Jerusalem. In this vision the prophet sees people being captured and imprisoned (22:2–3), the walls of the city being battered, and Jerusalem’s defenses being worthless (22:5–8).

Commentators have associated this attack on Jerusalem with (a) Sargon’s invasion of Philistia in 712–711 BC; (b) Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC; and (c) the Babylonian conquest of the city in 587/586 BC. It is very unlikely that this prophecy fits 711 BC because there is no information that Jerusalem was attacked then (22:2). The references to restoring breaches in city walls (22:9–10) and directing water to the Lower Pool through a tunnel (probably Hezekiah’s tunnel, 22:9–11) demonstrate that preparation for the Assyrian siege were already complete (2 Chr 32:1–5) and that this message came during the Assyrian siege in 701 BC (not after it was over). The joy and revelry demonstrate a sense of confidence (or overconfidence) in what the city of

Jerusalem did to prepare itself for this attack (22:2, 13). In stark contrast to this attitude, the prophet lamented (22:4,12) because the people were not putting their trust in God who planned all of these events (22:11). The period of Hezekiah was the time when Shebna and Eliakim worked within the king's court (36:3), though in a couple of different official positions because of Shebna's unwise behavior (22:15–25).

After discussing the possibilities Haley concludes that the most likely choices for the events covered by the prophecy are 1) the siege by Sennacherib (701 B.C.) and 2) the entire period from Sennacherib's siege to the fall of the city at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.).

“The valley of vision” is a name given to Jerusalem and not to a particular valley. Others prophets applied other names. Jeremiah (21:13) calls it “the inhabitant of the valley and of the rock of the plain.” He also calls it “the mountain of the fields” (Jer. 17:3). Zephaniah (1:11) applies the epithet Maktesh (the “mortar” or “cauldron”) to a portion of the city. Symbols have meaning and this one is no exception. A valley is a deep, still, solitary place, but shut in by mountains. Jerusalem was an enclosed place, hidden and shut of from the world. It was also the place God chose to show to his prophets the mysteries of his government of the world. Isaiah's message is that Jehovah's judgment is about to fall upon this city and no prophecies relating to the Assyrian age of judgment or those proclaimed in the midst of the Assyrian calamities are as destitute as this one.

It begins by exposing the nature and worthlessness of their confidence. They sit on their rooftops watch the enemy advance and are certain that they will defeat their enemy. It is as if they are settling in to watch a parade without realizing that it is the victory parade of their enemy. They are not even given the honor of falling in battle. The battle is over before it began without an arrow being fired. Their leaders desert the city but they are caught and bound by the opposing army. Fast forward to the capture of Zedekiah when Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:7-11).

That which he prophesies strikes Isaiah's heart. He asks that his people look away while he weeps bitterly. The Hebrew word translated “bitterly” means to weep until one is exhausted. The day of God's judgment is a day in which men crowd together

with great noise (discomfiture, confusion panic), a day in which Jerusalem and its inhabitants will be trodden down by foes, and a day of perplexity. It is a day from the Lord in the valley of vision in which the walls of the city were undermined and, as they fall as a result of the siege-artillery the noise is as “crying to the mountains” (4-5).

Of the nations in Assyria’s army Isaiah mentions two – Elam and Kir.¹ Together they represent the expanse of the Assyrian empire from south to north. There were foot soldiers who uncovered the shield² accompanied by charioteers and horsemen. Judah is overrun. Its choice valleys are filled with horsemen and chariots waiting at the gate for entry into the city (6-7).

The invaders shall take away the veil of Judah. The veil has been variously interpreted. Is it the veil that blinded them to the threatening danger? Is it the removal of that which has protected Judah from shame and disgrace so that it now stood open to shame and dishonor? Is it a reference to God who has withdrawn his presence and thus his protection from Judah so that Judah had no defense that would or could succeed? Perhaps it is the latter. God certainly did withdraw his presence and protection. It was there when Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem, but it was absent when Nebuchadnezzar invaded (Ezek. 11:22-25). With God’s departure they have only themselves on which to rely. The arm of flesh still fails them. Their only hope was to look at the armor in the house of the forest. This is probably a reference to the forest-house built by Solomon upon Zion for the storing and display of valuable arms and utensils. Its name was derived from the four rows of cedar columns that ran all around

1. Elam was the Semitic nation of Susiana (Chuzistan), whose original settlements were the row of valleys between the Zagros chain and the chain of advanced mountains bounding the Assyrian plains on the east, and who were greatly dreaded as bowmen (Ezek. 32:24; Jer. 49:35), and *Kir*, the inhabitants of the country of the Cyrus river, which was an Assyrian province, according to 2 Kings 16:9 and Amos 1:5, and still retained its dependent position even in the time of the Achaemenides, when Armenia, at any rate, is expressly described in the arrowheaded writings as a Persian province, though a rebellious one.

2. Taken off for the battle, the leather covering of the shield was intended to protect the embossed figures on it from dust or injury during the march. “The quiver” and “the shield” express two classes—light and heavy armed troops.

it 1 Kings 7:2-5). They saw the many breaches of the city of David and they gathered together the waters of the lower pool³ to begin to prepare for the siege. They then set about to repair the breaches in the walls. They began by numbering the houses and then pulled down those that were suitable and used them as a source of materials with which to repair the wall. Finally they added another water source from the old pool (8-11a).

Unfortunately, they failed to do the one thing needful. They did not turn to the One who had purposed the event long ago and who would bring it to pass. That One was now calling them to weeping, mourning, baldness, and girdling with sackcloth. But there was no repentance. Instead of these events leading them to repentance and return to God, they reacted by seeking their comfort by sinking more deeply into depravity and degradation, adopting the Hedonistic philosophy of eating and drinking because tomorrow they would die. God responds by telling them that their transgression will not be forgiven until they die. They had committed sin that could be forgiven only by the death of the nation (11b-14).

Vv. 15-25 – The Failure of the Stewards

The prophets often addressed their words to the leadership of society because leaders typically set the course for the nation. Faithful leaders brought blessing upon the country; unfaithful leaders brought ruin. Shebna and Eliakim are examples of each.

Shebna (2 Kings 18:18, 26) is officially described as “over the house.” This was the name given to an office of state of great importance in both kingdoms (1 Kings 4:6;

3. Keil & Delitzsch suggest that the lower pool and the old pool, probably the upper, i.e., the lower and upper Gihon, were upon the western side of the city, the lower (*Birket es-Sultan*) to the west of Sion, the upper (*Birket el-Mamilla*) farther up to the west of Akra (Robinson, i. 483–486; v. Raumer, *Pal.* pp. 305–6). *Kibbēṭz* either means to collect in the pool by stopping up the outflow, or to gather together in the reservoirs and wells of the city by means of artificial canals. The latter, however, would most probably be expressed by קִבְּבֵטֵז ; so that the meaning that most naturally suggests itself is, that they concentrate the water, so as to be able before the siege to provide the city as rapidly as possible with a large supply.

18:3), in fact the highest office of all, and one so vastly superior to all others (Isa. 36:3; 37:2), that it was sometimes filled by the heir to the throne (2 Chron. 26:21). The person “who was over the house” had the whole of the domestic affairs of the sovereign under his superintendence, and was therefore also called the **SOCĒN** or administrator (from *sâcan*, related to *shâcan*, to assist in a friendly, neighborly manner, or to be generally serviceable: see on Job 22:2), as standing nearest to the king. In this post of eminence Shebna had helped to support that proud spirit of self-security and self-indulgent forgetfulness of God, for which the people of Jerusalem had in the foregoing oracle been threatened with death. At the same time, he may also have been a leader of the Egyptian party of magnates, and with this anti-theocratical policy may have been the opponent of Isaiah in advising the king. Hence the general character of Isa. 22:1–14 now changes into a distinct and special prophecy against this Shebna. The time at which it was fulfilled was the same as that referred to in Isa. 22:1–14. There was still deep peace, and the great minister of state was driving about with splendid equipages, and engaged in superintending the erection of a family sepulcher. In this post of eminence Shebna had helped to support that proud spirit of self-security and self-indulgent forgetfulness of God, for which the people of Jerusalem had in the foregoing oracle been threatened with death. At the same time, he may also have been a leader of the Egyptian party of magnates, and with this anti-theocratical policy may have been the opponent of Isaiah in advising the king. Hence the general character of Isa. 22:1–14 now changes into a distinct and special prophecy against this Shebna. The time at which it was fulfilled was the same as that referred to in Isa. 22:1–14. There was still deep peace, and the great minister of state was driving about with splendid equipages, and engaged in superintending the erection of a family sepulcher.

While Shebna occupies a position of trust he was using his position for his own gain. The sepulcher that he erected was massive and so designed that he might be remembered as a great man (16). Jehovah would not permit Shebna’s unfaithfulness to stand. He would hurl Shebna away violently and wrap him up closely with shame. Neither Shebna nor his family had any use for such a sepulcher because he was going to lose his office and taken into captivity where he would die (17-19).

Shebna's replacement would be Eliakim. If the Shebna and Eliakim mentioned in 36:3 are the same two men, then these changes in position had occurred by the time of Sennacherib's invasion. Eliakim is called the "servant of Jehovah," as one who was already a servant of God in his heart and conduct. His appointment will be accompanied by an investiture. (20-21).

The "key" represents the power of the key. For this reason it is placed upon his shoulder (See Isa. 9:6). This key was properly handled by the king (Rev. 3:7), and therefore by the "house-mayor" only in his stead. The power of the keys consisted not only in the supervision of the royal chambers, but also in the decision of who was and who was not to be received into the king's service.⁴ Eliakim's leadership will be exercised with compassionate authority and provide stability "as a nail in a sure place."⁵ Unfortunately, Eliakim was made to bear more, and more responsibilities were heaped upon him. Finally the peg could sustain them no longer, it gave way, and it bore the burden no more (22-25).

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Burden of Tyre

Vv. 1-7 – The Judgment of Tyre and the Effect of Her Fall

This is the last of the oracles against the nations. These nations are not just symbolic representative cities; they are real nations at the time of Isaiah that God will judge for their sins. God's destruction of all these nations, including the great sea power Tyre,

4. There is a resemblance, therefore, to the giving of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter under the New Testament. But there the "binding" and "loosing" introduce another figure, though one similar in sense; whereas here, in the "opening" and "shutting," the figure of the key is retained.

5. The Hebrew word translated "nail" in the ASV may be translated "peg."

clearly demonstrates God's sovereign power over every people on land and sea. Looking at these messages from another perspective, Tyre was a Phoenician city on the Mediterranean coast. It provided important support to the Phoenician economy as a leading merchant and port city. People came by land and sea to trade with Tyre. It was a significant city of wealth where ideas as well as goods were exchanged. As independent as it might have been, God still controlled it.⁶

Isaiah gets straight to the point. He describes the ships of Tyre howling⁷ as they return home and observe the wasteland that their home has become. They hear rumors of its fate from the ships that they meet on their journey. This will be terrible news to the sailors when they learn that their homes, families, and secure city no longer exist. They will naturally wail in agony about what has happened (1).

Isaiah next calls upon the inhabitants of Sidon and the coastal islands of Phoenicia to "mourn" (better than "be still"). They are to mourn because those who have replenished them (enabled their wealth) by trade with Egypt can do so no more (vv. 2-3).

Isaiah exhorts the Phoenician people to be ashamed and embarrassed because of their loss of honor and glory. "The sea hath spoken, the stronghold of the sea." This language may refer to the same entity, but likely it refers to two with the latter applying to Tyre, which subsequently speaks. The ancient embarrassment of a childless woman is used to declare that the destruction of the Phoenician cities (the sons and daughter of the main cities) will no longer give birth to new cities or nurture new colonies. This terrible news of the total decimation of Phoenicia will affect Tyre's trading partners. The Egyptians will be in anguish because their wealth depended on the ships of Tyre that transported their products to market (4-5).

6. Ezekiel's later portrayal of the wealth and security of Tyre in Ezek 26-28 should not be read back into the situation of Tyre in this text, but those chapters give the modern reader a fuller understanding of the wealth and stature of this great nation.

7. Isaiah's language is imperative – he calls on them to howl. He uses other imperatives as he continues the pronouncement of judgment.

The last imperative of this section is similar to v. 1. It calls on the people to wail because of their great loss. They may escape to Tarshish but there they shall continue wailing.⁸ Given the destruction and wailing, God asks if this is their joyous city that existed from days of old and traveled afar in trading and getting wealth. Thus this imperative ironically brings to people's mind the hopelessness of Tyre's situation. It will be hard to fathom the enormous changes in life at Tyre. Once this city was full of riches and excitement, the wild carousing life of sailors and merchants, and all the exuberant nightlife that goes with that. This was the nation that had everything going for it. It colonized various cities to protect and establish its trading operations far away from home. But now what has happened to that very old city? This devastating defeat will transform it into something totally different from what it was in the past.

Vv. 8-12 – Jehovah, the Executioner of Judgment

How did this destruction come to pass? By chance? Bad luck? Natural catastrophe? Not at all. God wants all to know that once more Jehovah of hosts has worked his purpose! Isaiah begins with a rhetorical question designed to lead all, especially his Hebrew audience, to think about their own situation and to teach them a valuable historical lesson. What will happen in Tyre is not totally unrelated to what will happen in Judah. Although politicians, rulers, and people looking back on it will have theories as to what went wrong at Tyre, Isaiah challenges the people in Jerusalem to give the real reason Tyre and Sidon will change from an exciting and prosperous commercial center that influenced all the Mediterranean nations to a place of no importance. Was this just a freak accident that is unexplainable, was its defeat due to poor leadership by the king of Tyre, or was the fall of Tyre based on the wise strategy of a cunning Assyrian king? How could a powerful nation that had crowned many kings of small city-states suddenly have this happen to it? How could merchants be treated one day like a prince or famous person and then suddenly be gone? What happened to these proud, wealthy, and powerful people? Someone is responsible for bringing about the

8. Some suggest Isaiah is saying that they would want to escape to Trashish but they would find no way of escape. In either case they continue wailing.

dramatic defeat of a nation that for years seemed to have unlimited wealth, power, friends, and trading partners (8).

Isaiah answers his own question (9). Jehovah of hosts purposed it. His plan included profaning and defiling the pride of man that seeks his own glory. God alone is to be glorified and set apart as holy. Isaiah explains how God's plan will apply to "the honorable of the earth" who think they are so great. They will be brought low, disgraced, and humiliated (9).

One consequence of Tyre's fall was that its colonies, like Tarshish, became independent. They no longer do the bidding of Tyre; they can spread themselves over the land like the Nile overflowing its boundaries (10).

Isaiah now explains to Tarshish that which happened to its mother country. Jehovah, reaching over the sea, has thrown the lands of Hither Asia and Egypto-Ethiopia into a state of the most anxious excitement, and has summoned them as instruments of destruction with regard to Kena'an.⁹ Hitherto this nation has been untouched, like a virgin, but now it resembles one ravished and defiled. If now they flee across to Cyprus (*cittiyim* or *cittim*), there will be no rest for them even there, because the colony, emancipated from the Phoenician yoke, will only be too glad to rid herself to the unwelcome guests from the despotic mother country (11-12).

Vv. 13-18 – The Fate of Phoenicia: Though Cast Down, Tyre's Prosperity Shall Be Restored

If one or two people might still doubt the power of God's hand or his ability to fulfill his plan, Isaiah offers one final proof that what God says actually happens. Some of God's past predictions about Babylon have already come true by this time, so it would be foolish for anyone to question what God says. Shortly before 702 BC and the giving of this message, Sennacherib put down a revolt by Merodoch-baladan by attacking the cities of Babylon, tearing down its fortresses, making it a place for wild animals, and

9. Phoenicia called itself *Kena'an* (Canaan).

turning the land into ruins. Now that great country is nothing. If God can do this to Babylon, why can he not do the same to Tyre or any other nation (even Judah)?

The paragraph ends with the same exhortation that was at the beginning of the paragraph. The sailors on the ships of Tarshish should wail because God will destroy Tyre, that great fortress in the sea! There is no hope for it (13-14).

After predicting the fall of Tyre, the prophet surprisingly speaks about the future revival of Tyre after seventy years, similar to the positive words at the end of the Egypt oracle in 19:18–25 (at the end of the first series of five nations). Just as the Egyptians and Assyrians will one day worship God (19:21), so the people of Tyre will one day present holy gifts to the Lord (23:18). The implication of this prophecy for the prophet's audience in Judah is that the people of Judah need to trust God, for several of these foreign nations will eventually see the error of their ways and come to trust God.

Once Tyre is destroyed, it will be in decline for about seventy years (23:15). Instead of being a major player in international trade, it will be forgotten. The seventy years specifies the average life of a king—or a man—in Psa. 90:10. This time frame is much longer than the earlier “one to three years of a hired worker” in 16:14 and 21:16. It is impossible to say when this seventy-year period began or ended, but if the Assyrians humbled the Phoenicians around 702 BC then the seventy years would extend to around 630 BC, the time when the Assyrian empire collapsed after the death of Ashurbanipal. Since Tyre will be insignificant during this seventy-year period, the text does not give any details concerning what will happen there. Instead it moves immediately to the period after the seventy years by quoting the “Song of the Prostitute”—probably a song that Isaiah's audience had heard before.

The song seems to deride or mock a haggard prostitute who is forgotten and no longer popular. Instead of men knocking on her door to visit her, she must take to the streets to play beautiful music and sing suggestive songs that will attract some business. The hope is that she will be remembered instead of forgotten, just like Tyre will want to be remembered after her period of decline. Tyre is not called a harlot here; her period of decline is only compared to the life of a forgotten harlot (15-16).

The final few verses describe how God will treat Tyre at the end of the seventy years. Now Tyre is compared to a harlot, but this symbolizes a return to being an important player in international trade. Because God will look with favor on Tyre, she will once again actively return to prominence and not be a forgotten merchant. Some of the money Tyre earns from international trade will be set apart as holy to God. Instead of hoarding tons of gold in their vaults for their own pleasures, they will generously give it to the temple of God to be used to support temple personnel who dwell in God's presence. This suggests a dramatic change of priorities and a heart transformation that desires to glorify God. This prophecy is consistent with the 2:1-4 that all nations will come to Zion to see God.

Isaiah still speaks to a Hebrew audience in Judah about God's sovereign control over all the nations of the earth. The Hebrews not only observed the mighty power of God's outstretched arm against other nations; they also learned from these examples why God would judge each nation. As God's people faced the reality of military action against Judah, it became clear that it made no sense to look to any of these nations for security through alliances. Since God will soon destroy all of these nations, Judah's only hope was to trust in the power of Almighty God. This basic theological commitment to trust God for everything in life is held up again and again as the only hope for mankind. Life, liberty, security, and prosperity are dependent on the gracious plan of a sovereign God, not on any arrogant attempts to manipulate circumstances through human wisdom, military might, or political alliances. God has revealed this truth to his prophets and history proves that it is so; therefore, each generation and each nation must choose how it will respond. The proud and self-reliant will be humbled; the humble people who trust God will walk in the security of his plan.

SECTION THREE

World Judgment and Deliverance of God's People

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A World Judgment

Vv. 1-13 – Desolation of the Earth and the World City

This series of prophecies (chs. 24-27) is intended to stand in a relation of steady progress to the oracles concerning the nations; and this relation is sustained by the fact that Jeremiah read them in connection with these oracles (compare Isa. 24:17, 18, with Jer. 48:43, 44). Chs. 24-27 stand in the same relation to Isa. 13-23, as Isa. 11, 12 to Isa. 7-10.

There was no other than Isaiah who was so incomparable a master of language. Again, the incomparable depth in the contents of Isa. 24-27 does not shake our confidence in his authorship, since the whole book of this Solomon among the prophets is full of what is incomparable. And in addition to much that is peculiar in this cycle of prophecies, which does not astonish us in a prophet so richly endowed, and so characterized by a continual change "from glory to glory," the whole cycle is so thoroughly Isaiah's in its deepest foundation, and in a hundred points of detail, that it is most uncritical to pronounce the whole to be certainly not Isaiah's simply because of these peculiarities.

"Behold" is one of Isaiah's favorite introductions of important themes (cf. 3:1; 17:1; 19:1; 26:1). Hailey suggests that it usually introduces something in the immediate

future, but that is not always the case.¹⁰ Whether near or far, Keil & Delitzsch say that it always refers to something in the future. Here the term focuses on Jehovah who makes the world empty.¹¹ The whole earth will be made waste, turned upside down, and its inhabitants scattered. There will be no respect of persons. It will affect people and priest, servant and master, maid and mistress, buyer and seller, creditor and debtor, taker of interest and giver of interest. Its certainty is guaranteed by the word of Jehovah. The reason for the devastation is that the earth is polluted as a result of transgressing the laws,¹² violating the statutes, and breaking the everlasting covenant. The violators are found guilty, sentence is executed and few are left. The world cries out for its loss. The waste city¹³ is broken down, its mirth is gone, and the city is left desolate. The devastation is complete. That which remains is compared to the thrashing of the olive tree to get the last fruit and the gleaning to gather the last grape (“the few men left” ?, v. 6).

Vv. 14-23 – Premature Rejoicing and More Judgments

Rejoicing arises from the recognition of the majesty of Jehovah in judgment and mercy. The praise comes from the sea, literally, “lights” or “fires,” denoting the direction from which the light dawns. It reaches the isles of the sea, the Mediterranean, and the lands in between. They have begun to see that God’s hand controls world affairs. The songs come from the uttermost parts of the earth, *i.e.*, God’s judgment had universal influence.

10. An example is the use in 7:14 where the Son to be born of a virgin was centuries in the future.

11. The term “earth” may refer to the whole earth (e.g., Gen. 1:1, 10-12), or it may be translated “land,” e.g., the “land” of the nation of Israel. Here it seems to be used in the cosmological sense.

12. The “law” is not just the Mosaic code of Israel. It includes the law written on the heart of the Gentiles (Rom. 2:15).

13. Some commentators see a particular city, including Jerusalem. However, given “earth” in a cosmological sense and “law” in the broad sense, it is more likely that the “city” is a general term depicting the general city of the earth to be estranged from God.

“Glory to the righteous” is the theme of the songs.¹⁴ While Isaiah identifies with those rejoicing, he recognizes that the rejoicing is premature; thus he declares that he “pines” (wastes away). The conditions justify more judgment, even judgment that will be more severe than those already administered. In spite of “the few” who rejoice, there is no real conversion in the world around him. The treacherous only grow more so, indeed feel as the inhabitant of the earth might, there is no escape. The wicked will cover the earth, but God’s judgment will follow them. Earlier the earth was emptied and laid waste. Now it is broken, rent asunder, and shaken violently. It will stagger like a drunken man and swing to and fro like a hammock. The weight of sin has reached the point where the earth cannot support it. Jehovah will not tolerate it; the earth will fall never to rise again.

Is this the final judgment that is under consideration? Many commentators so conclude. The strongest support is Isaiah’s statement that the earth will fall and not rise again. However, one must always remember that similarity of language does not of itself establish identity of meaning. The question is what the language means in this context. Isaiah’s prophecy is concerned primarily, if not completely, with the coming of the Messiah. Thus far there has been no passage in Isaiah that refers to final judgment.¹⁵ Hailey makes a strong case that this passage makes no such reference. He contends that it refers to “the total and complete collapse of pagan powers, to the failure and destruction of the heathen world, to the defeat of lust and the forces governed by it.” The phrase “in that day” always refers to that which is being discussed in the context. One of the events that will happen in that day is that Jehovah will “punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.”

14. The glory may be offered to Jehovah, the Righteous One, or it may be offered in recognition of the righteous ones who have triumphed in the judgment. The KJV and ASV use the latter and the NASV use the former. It seems to be better to understand it as the KJV and ASV with those who have escaped God’s judgment rejoicing because they are considered righteous before the Lord. This is supported by the fact that, unless here, God is never called “the Righteous One” in scripture.

15. It is certainly true that some passages have been interpreted by commentators to refer to the millennial reign of Christ. However, since there is no such doctrine taught by scripture properly understood no passage can be properly understood to refer to final judgment.

This description fits “the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). The battle between these forces and heavenly forces originated in Eden and continues to the coming of Christ. The conflict and the defeat of Satan’s forces are described in Revelation. Satan and his forces are thrown down from the high position that they had held (Rev. 12:7-10). With the downfall of Satan the kings of the earth are destined to defeat (Rev. 17:14; 19:19-21). With the defeat of Satan by Jesus, Satan was cast into the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3; his “prison” v. 7). Significantly, “after many days shall they be visited (margin, “punished”). Satan’s defeat by Jesus truly shook the earth to the point that it could not rise again to its former power. Truly did John write, “And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10). Verse 23 concludes Isaiah’s discussion and clearly that of which he is speaking is the reign of Christ that began when his Father gave him the throne of his father, David (Luke 1:32). He is now reigning in heaven and, according to 1 Thess. 4:17, he will never again be on the earth. Micah, Isaiah’s contemporary, identifies the occurrence of this event: “and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever (Micah 4:7). In the same context he says that this will occur in the latter days (Micah 4:1-4; Isa. 2:2-4), the age of the Messiah. The Hebrew writer connects these events with the present age when he writes to Christians then living, “but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Hymns of Thanksgiving for the Divine Mercy

Vv. 1-5 – A Hymn of Thanksgiving for Victory over the Terrible Ones

Chapter 25 contains three hymns of praise and thanksgiving to Jehovah for victory over the world forces that stood in opposition to his spiritual people. He is also praised for his offer of salvation to the heathen nations and for His reward to those who wait for him. A fourth song follows in Chapter 26. Isaiah also continues to speak of spiritual forces rather than actual cities or particular nations.

In chapter 24 there was premature rejoicing. Now, with Christ upon his throne reigning in Mount Zion Isaiah breaks forth in praise, exalting God's mighty name for the wonderful things that he had done in faithfulness and truth to accomplish his purpose. That which he has done in defeating the earth's nations and cities has left them as monuments to man's folly. That which he has done will lead people to glorify him and terrible nations to fear him. Note that Isaiah does not say that they will submit to him and follow him, but that they are impressed with the power and control that he exercises over his creation. Another factor that leads nations to honor and reverence is God's care for the poor and needy. He is a stronghold to the needy, a refuge from the storm, and a shade from the heat when the terrible ones come. As heat can be subdued by a cloud, so God will silence the noise of strangers. The second phrase helps make clear the first – the song of the terrible ones will be brought low. When the terrible ones fail to recognize the power of God's and his judgments but still refuse to change their character, God shall bring them down.

Vv. 6-8 – Jehovah’s Feast for the Nations

Isaiah now praises the feast that God has prepared in Mount Zion for the nations. It is described as a feast of fat things and fine wines.¹⁶ It is the feast prepared for all, Gentiles and Jews, who flow to Mt. Zion (2:2-4). God will destroy the veil that covers people and nations. Some understand this to be a veil of sorrow, hopelessness and pessimism. However, Isaiah says in 60:2-3 that the darkness that covers the earth and the gross darkness that covers the people will be replaced by the rising of Jehovah and the seeing of his glory. The nations will come to God’s light and the kings to his brightness. This is consistent with the New Testament. Paul described the Gentiles as “being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart” (Eph. 4:18). Paul told the Corinthians that when Jews whose minds were hardened “turned to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (2 Cor. 3:14-16). Having made provision for the great spiritual feast and having removed the veil of ignorance and unbelief, Isaiah proclaims a third provision. He hath swallowed up death forever,¹⁷ wiping away all tears and taking away the reproach of his people. God said it and that guarantees it.

Vv. 9-12 – The Joy of Those Who Wait and the Destruction of the Proud

‘In that day’ places this section in the same time as that which precedes it in vv. 6-8. Those who have waited upon Jehovah will be saved. Their expectation has been realized; he has placed salvation in Zion for Israel [his] glory (46:13). They will rejoice in their salvation (cf. 61:3). The helping and protecting hand of Jehovah will rest upon his mountain. Isaiah makes an abrupt shift to the judgment of Moab in addition to chs. 15-16. Moab was a symbol of pride and arrogance (see 16:6; Jer. 48:29-30) that had to be destroyed before anyone could enjoy the salvation of Mt. Zion. Moab held

16. The wine upon its lees is wine that remains on the settlings until it is matured at which time it is poured off and stained.

17. This and other parts of this chapter convince some commentators that Isaiah is here speaking of and addressing Christ. That is certainly possible. Whichever is the case, Isaiah’s language is strongly monotheistic.

Israel in derision, magnifying itself against Jehovah (Jer. 48:27, 42) and held the dignity of man in contempt (Amos 2:1; Zeph. 2:8, 10). Therefore, it would be trodden down in his place even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill. Isaiah is not saying that God hates Moab. He is saying that the judgment against Moab will be complete. A century later Jeremiah held out a promise of hope to Moab (Jer. 48:47), but before Moab can participate in salvation its pride and arrogance must be destroyed. This is the point of Isaiah's prophecy.

This is substantiated by vv. 11-12. Moab will work to avoid destruction (keep from drowning), but will not succeed. Jehovah will succeed and Moab's pride and the skill of his hands by which he sought to avoid destruction will not avail. All of that in which Moab as trusted will be brought down, even to the dust.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Glory to God for His Righteous Deeds!

Vv. 1-6 – Praise for the Strong City

Chapter 25 closes with the land of Moab being trodden down and its lofty castles destroyed. Chapter 26 begins with the people of Judah boasting of an impregnable city. They proclaim their strong city in song, a city protected by walls and bulwarks of salvation from God. The gates are open so that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in. Complete security is guaranteed. Jehovah "will be unto her a wall of fire round about,"¹⁸ and . . . the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. 2:5). Those who trust in the

18. This should bring to mind the hymn "I Have Found a Friend in Jesus." "He will never, never leave me, nor yet forsake me here, While I live by faith and do his blessed will; A wall of fire about me, I've nothing now to fear, With his manna he my hungry soul shall fill.

Lord shall be kept in perfect peace.¹⁹ They will be recognized because their mind is stayed on God. They will also trust in Jehovah forever knowing that such trust is not misplaced because Jehovah is an everlasting rock (1-4).

The downfall of the arrogant is in view once more. God's overthrow of the world-city of wickedness is progressive. The stronghold of all that exalts itself against God must and will be brought down (2 Cor. 10:3-5 (5-6)).

Vv. 7-10 – The Effects of Jehovah's Judgments

How different from the way of the rebellious is the path of the righteous. Their way is upright because the One who is upright directs them. The righteous know that God's judgments must come, and through them they have waited upon the Lord. Jehovah's name and memorial has been the desire of their soul. They have undergone judgments but in those years they waited for the judgments of God to fall on their oppressors. They sought him in the night. This need not be a literal night; rather it is the night of their affliction. They were not impatient; they used the time of their affliction to seek earnestly after God, knowing that righteousness is learned when his judgments are in the earth (7-8).

The wicked do not appreciate favor. Receiving it does not deter them from their unrighteousness. Even in the land of the righteous surrounded by good examples they will ignore those examples and deal unjustly. Worse yet, he cannot behold and will not consider that it is from the hand of Jehovah.

Vv. 11-15 – The Lord Jehovah Versus "Other Lords"

Some place v. 11 with the preceding verses and some with the verses that follow. The latter seems to be the better choice. It begins a trilogy of addresses culminating in "O Jehovah, our God." However, it is closely related to the preceding verses because it continues the refusal of the wicked to learn righteousness. Here God lifts up his hand but it is not seen, *i.e.*, they remain unimpressed with God's nature and greatness. One

19. The language of another hymn – "Peace, Perfect Peace."

thing they cannot miss, however, is God's zeal for his people. Another event that they will not miss is "the fire of God" (see, Psa. 79:9; Zeph. 1:18) that shall put them to shame and devour them. The second address is to Jehovah who will ordain peace for his people. Now they have learned that the arm of flesh will fail them, and they rely on God who has wrought all their works for them – deliverance, preservation, and accomplishments. The third address is to "Jehovah our God." The "other lords" who had dominion over God's people may be either conquering foreign rulers or heathen idols. In a sense both are involved because it was following idols that led to being conquered. God has destroyed the conquerors and oppressors, and his people look to him and his name. The nations and their god's have been defeated. The power of the idol-gods is altogether passed away. It was for this end—therefore—that God had visited and destroyed them, and made their very memory to perish. How strange it seems that the "great gods" whom so many millions worshipped in former times—Bel, and Asshur, and Ammon, and Zeus, and Jupiter—should have passed so completely away as to be remembered as myths if they are remembered at all. In contrast to the heathen idols God has increased his people, spiritual Israel, and increased the borders of their land. God is glorified.