

ISAIAH: JUDGMENT AND HOPE

21. Isaiah 24-27

The Little Apocalypse (Part 2)

Let's turn in our Bibles to [Isaiah 26](#)

REVIEW

[Isaiah 24-27](#) Tonight we're finishing up a four-chapter section of Isaiah that is sometimes referred to as **the little apocalypse** as these chapters **look forward all the way to the end of the age**. One of the key phrases in this little section is **"in that day"** as it pops up almost **once every 10 verses** in [Isaiah 24-27](#). That phrase can be used to speak of an event that will be fulfilled near to the time of Isaiah's ministry in Judah — but at the same time acts like a slingshot— placing the fulfillment of that pronouncement out into the distant future from day of Isaiah — and even distant to us.

THE BIG IDEA of Isaiah 24-27 is TRUST IN YHWH. To unpack that Isaiah looks all the way out to the end of the age. Isaiah is giving this glimpse of the end of God's Story (which by God's design runs through the nation of Israel) to transform the present faith and worship of God's people — and ours! Whenever God shows us the future of this planet — the future hope of His people — it changes our future! Not like a science fiction book/movie where someone travels back in time with information of the future so they can change outcomes. The divine unveiling of the future (apocalypse means *unveiling*) is intended to transform us — change the way we think and live; change our values and priorities; change how we pray and how we live in every future moment as we move towards the end of God's story. Knowing the end of the story begs the question posited in the New Testament (that was read to us at the front of our study).

2 Peter 3:11–15 (NKJV) ¹¹*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,* ¹²*looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?* ¹³*Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* ¹⁴*Therefore, beloved, looking forward*

to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (NLT) gives people time to be saved).....

2 Peter 3:17–18 (NKJV) ¹⁷*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.*

In chapter 24 Isaiah describes a global cataclysmic event.

Isaiah 24:1 *the Lord will empty the earth and make it desolate (CSB – strip the earth bare), and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants.*

Literally — distort its surface = *ruin its face*. The Jerusalem Bible uses the term ‘buckle’ it’s surface. ¹

He basically says it’s not going to discriminate between people groups, socio-economic status, religious or irreligious, employee or employer, merchant or consumer, lender or debtor.

The Lord frames the reality of this cataclysmic event as an act of judgment. **Isaiah 24:5** “The earth lies defiled,” or literally polluted, “under its inhabitants.” This massive, cataclysmic event that *is* coming on the earth is because we, the inhabitants of the planet, have transgressed God’s law. Man has defiled the earth.

In Isaiah 24:14 we saw this radical shift from descriptions of an unthinkable global judgment to rejoicing that is going to take place AFTER this cataclysmic judgment.

Isaiah wants us to see that the incomprehensible judgment that *is* going to come **is not the end of the story!** God’s purpose in this judgment is not destruction that

¹ Kidner, F. D. (1994). Isaiah. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 646). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

leaves things in utter chaos. God is going to usher in a New Heaven and a New Earth — a place of great glory! A place that shouts to us that The Creator and Redeemer is worthy of worship. THAT is a MASSIVE truth that we need to bring to bear on those moments of life when things seem darkest! Whatever we are going through at the moment — that is **not** the end of God’s story!

Chapter 25 began with Isaiah’s response to all God has shown him.

ISAIAH 25

¹O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things,

Isaiah was exalting God because he was utterly amazed at how everything he saw was simply **extraordinary —hard to understand** The fact that we can’t understand what God is doing isn’t cause to not worship God — it’s the reason **why** we should worship God! God is worthy to be worshipped because He IS God — whose wisdom and ways are unsearchable! *“Oh, the depths and the riches of the wisdom of God, how unsearchable are his ways, how unknowable is his justice.”*

Isaiah 25:7-8 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

Isaiah 25:9 It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

THAT should be the heartbeat and breath of every man and woman who knows Jesus. **THAT** should be the deepest longing of our soul — to SEE GOD!

Isaiah 26

¹In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: “We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks.

We’re not sure of the exact point in Isaiah’s ministry when he is prophesying the things in these four chapters. We do know that much of the book of Isaiah takes place during the time when Jerusalem was facing the coming invasion of Assyrian army under Sennacherib. That time frame would have included the massive efforts of king Hezekiah to bolster the city — prepare for a siege. Let’s re-read the verse again in that light. Something should stand out to us.

*¹In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: “We have a strong city; he sets up **salvation as walls and bulwarks.***

Isaiah is speaking of a day when the people of Judah will sing of how YHWH’s salvation will be their walls.

New Bible Commentary — Our city is *strong*, not with brute force but with the saving activity of the living God, the *Rock eternal*.²

²Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.

³You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

The book of Isaiah is filled with precious, invaluable gems — promises to be stored up like treasure in our hearts to meditate on, trust in and hold on to.

The phrase **perfect peace** is actually *shalom shalom*. In the Hebrew language the use of repetition communicates intensity. It isn’t just *shalom* — it is *shalom shalom* — *perfect peace*. God promises that we can have — not just *shalom* — but *shalom shalom*, **and** even be *kept* in a place of *shalom shalom*.

² Kidner, F. D. (1994). Isaiah. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 648). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

F.B. Meyer — *“Understand, dear soul, that it is thy privilege to live inside the double doors of God’s loving care. He says to thee, ‘Peace, peace.’ If one assurance is not enough, He will follow it with a second and a third.”*

³**You keep him in perfect peace** — God is the keeper of the peace!

*keep watch, guard, protect, preserve — watchman*³

whose mind is stayed on you

The Hebrew word for *mind* is *yester*. It refers to what a person devises in the mind (NET translation note). I think the Christian Standard Bible translation really captures that

*CSB — You will keep **the mind that is dependent on you in perfect peace, for it is trusting in you.***

THAT is the mind that God keeps in the place of *shalom shalom*. God guards THAT mind with *shalom shalom*. We see this same truth expressed in **Proverbs 3:5** — *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.* The word *lean* comes from the same root as the word *stayed* in our text here in **Isaiah 26:3**.

Here’s how that perfectly integrates with Isaiah 26:3

You’re facing or in the middle of a painful, difficult situation; a decision you have to make that has moral consequences — or will have a significant impact on what your life is going to look like. HOW are you going to find shalom? That depends on what you devise in your mind. If you start with — and continue in — *“I’m not going to lean on / trust in / depend upon my own understanding or feelings. With everything in me I’m going to continually lean on God!* — you are going to find God keeping you in shalom shalom

³ Holladay, W. L., & Köhler, L. (2000). *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (p. 244). Leiden: Brill.

The battleground for trust — the battle over **where** we will place our hope — **where** we will place our faith — **begins** in our minds.

⁴Trust in the Lord forever,

Since faith in YHWH is the place of *shalom shalom*, Isaiah exhorts the people to trust in the Lord forever

Isaiah 26:4 (NET) Trust in the Lord from this time forward, even in Yah, the Lord, an enduring protector!

If you haven't been trusting Him — start trusting Him now!

for

The Lord calls on us to engage our minds in trusting Him completely — and with the little word **for** He gives us the rational basis for such hope and faith.

for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.

YHWH is perpetually and without ceasing our immovable solid refuge and hope.

As we walk through these amazing truths concerning faith we can circle back to the opening verse of the chapter and get a picture of a city — the City of God that is populated by those who have trusted in the true and living God to be their salvation — to be their immovable — solid — refuge and hope. The City of God stands in utter contradiction to the City of Man that's built on independence from God — rebellion against God

Isaiah shifts his focus on the city of man that is built upon the pride of man and stands in opposition to God and the City of God.

⁵For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. ⁶The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy.”

Again — we see this consistent theme in the book of Isaiah — God pulling down the lofty and exalting the humble. God pulling down those who in their arrogance and power oppressed the poor and now lower than those they oppressed.

⁷The path of the righteous is level; you make level the way of the righteous.

The idea of being righteous, of living a right life **is not** to be reduced to a matter of good versus bad. Righteousness is a road that leads somewhere.

⁸In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.

The idea here is not just that these people want to be right, but that they want to truly know the righteous one. They want to be in fellowship with God.

⁹My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.

There is the desire for wanting God to be present. From the vantage point of where we stand in the flow of the story of God this is looking forward to the return of Jesus.

There's a reason for desiring this

For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

Those who know the Lord are longing for this because they understand the way things work in fallen culture — the way fallen individuals and governments think and work. Look at **verse 10**.

¹⁰If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the Lord.

When things are easy and comfortable and good unbelieving men and women see no reason to trust God — in fact they think things are good because of the way they're running things — which is essentially a matter of this: Disadvantage others

for your own advantage (working definition of unrighteousness). So why repent of unrighteousness when it pays to be unrighteous?

THAT is the world system organizing itself without God and against God.
No Small side note — whenever there is a true movement of God it is going to result in social justice.

DON'T MISS THIS — God could easily say: *You know what, I'm worth worshipping when you have everything. I'm infinitely more than what you have. Since you don't want Me — I'm through with you!* But instead — when we are at our lowest point, when have nowhere else to look but up, when we say: *God, you are my last choice and my only hope*, THAT is when we see the majesty of YHWH! We see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus — in Jesus we see the arms of God wide open to receive us.

In everything Isaiah's been showing us we're seeing that God has a very unique set of tools (judgment, pain, difficulty) that He will use in His mercy to turn proud hearts back to Him.

Ray Ortlund — *The best place to find God is at rock-bottom. We all know that personally. Maybe America needs to find it out nationally. I hope not. There would be so much suffering and loss. But maybe it's our only path to national renewal. May God have mercy.*

¹¹O Lord, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them.

¹²O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works. ¹³O Lord our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance.

Isaiah is a descendant of Abraham. Abraham's descendants had a history of being crushed under the rule of tyrants. They served as a nation of slaves under Pharaoh in Egypt. During the prophetic ministry of Isaiah the shadow of another tyrant (Sennacherib) was looming over them. In the not too distant future Judah would be led into captivity in Babylon to serve Nebuchadnezzar. Yet Isaiah says — **but your name alone we bring to remembrance** — You continue to be our God."

¹⁴They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them.

Where are those tyrants? Every one of them has gone to the grave. Every one their kingdoms and their power and their wealth is gone — and yet Israel is still here.

¹⁵But you have increased the nation, O Lord, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land. ¹⁶O Lord, in distress they sought you; they poured out a whispered prayer when your discipline was upon them.

Isaiah pulls back another layer here. All of those tyrants were wicked and did wicked things — but in their own wicked choices they were also instruments used by God to deal with Israel's rebellion. We can go all the way back to the book of Deuteronomy where God said He would do that very thing. So, concerning Israel, Isaiah sees these tyrants as instruments to discipline God's people. Discipline is God's tool to bring about repentance and righteousness. Punishment is not that. When you commit a crime you do the time — that's punishment; it's what you deserve. But when we discipline a child the purpose is instruct them. Discipline is from the word disciple. Isaiah is saying that God's purposes concerning Judah and the city of Jerusalem is not to destroy but to purify, to discipline.

¹⁷Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O Lord; ¹⁸we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

The **NLT** is a great commentary on verses 17-18

***Isaiah 26:17–18 (NLT)** Just as a pregnant woman writhes and cries out in pain as she gives birth, so were we in your presence, Lord. ¹⁸We, too, writhe in agony, but nothing comes of our suffering. We have not given salvation to the earth, nor brought life into the world.*

THUS FAR Israel has failed to represent YHWH in the world. But the story isn't over. 700 years after Isaiah the Messiah would come who would give His life to rescue and redeem us the power and the penalty of sin (which is death) — and will one day in the future return to establish His rule on the earth and ultimately usher in a New Heavens and a New earth.

700 years before the day Jesus would say *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die John 11:25 (NIV)* Isaiah talks about the resurrection of the dead.

¹⁹Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

Isaiah has already announced God's great victory over death (25:7–8). Here 700 years before the apostle Paul — Isaiah says that the grave doesn't win. Here

***1 Corinthians 15:20–24; 26 (ESV)** ²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.....²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

²⁰Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.

Isaiah can say *for a little while* because he has an eternal perspective. He sees the finality of this present age and the fullness and forever of what's to come. In the same way Paul could say

***2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,*

When weighed in the scales of eternity, it's just a little while.

THAT is such a huge concept in light of fallen culture's obsession with right now. Without the reference point of forever — either in the presence of God or separated from God — people are shaped what they want right here and right now.

²¹For behold, the Lord is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

Resurrection is AWESOME for the man and woman who has repented of their sin and idolatry and because of Jesus are citizens of the forever Kingdom of their Savior. But resurrection is NOT such good news for those who refused to abdicate the throne of their little kingdom of one. There will be no hiding in that day — no reprise — no parole. Hell will be populated by countless self-loving, self-serving, unrighteous men and women who forever will still want everything and forever not have it.

ISAIAH 27

¹In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.

In the Ancient Near East every people group had a narrative of origins and deities that influenced the world. They all observed the chaos in the world and most attributed it to a dragon. Virtually all of them included within their narratives the account of one of their god's defeating this dragon. The terms used by Isaiah to

describe this dragon are exactly the terms used of Lotan – the chaos monster) destroyed by Baal in the Canaanite creation myth. ^{4 5}

Isaiah isn't endorsing their polytheistic systems of belief — he's saying that the chaos that every culture in every time has observed and experienced will be destroyed. Death itself, the curse, sin itself — all those things will be destroyed by YHWH.

²In that day, "A pleasant vineyard, sing of it! ³I, the Lord, am its keeper; every moment I water it. Lest anyone punish it, I keep it night and day;

This is awesome! In the margin of your Bible there write Isaiah 5. In Isaiah 5 God uses the language of a vineyard to talk about Israel. There He says that Israel was a failed vineyard. It wasn't just fruitless — it produced bad grapes. But Chapter 5 wasn't the end of the story for Israel. In His steadfast love God kept working. Even at the time of Isaiah's ministry Israel was failing and on their way to captivity. But even at *that* time YHWH was working.

Look at what God says about the adversaries of His vineyard — He would rather reconcile than destroy.

⁴I have no wrath. Would that I had thorns and briers to battle! I would march against them, I would burn them up together. ⁵Or let them lay hold of my protection, let them make peace with me, let them make peace with me."

⁶In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit.

The fruit that God was looking for back in chapter 5 will be present in Israel.

***Isaiah 5:7 (ESV)** ⁷For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he **looked for justice**, but behold, bloodshed; **for righteousness**, but behold, an outcry!*

⁴ Geoffrey Grogan (Isaiah: Expositor's Bible Commentary)

⁵ Kidner, F. D. (1994). Isaiah. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 649). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

AGAIN — The story isn't over! There is coming a day when Israel will not only bear the fruit of righteousness and justice (the ways of the Lord)

Genesis 18:19 (ESV) ¹⁹*For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to **keep the way of the Lord** by doing **righteousness and justice...***

Their fruit (righteousness and justice) will fill the whole world!

⁷Has he struck them as he struck those who struck them? Or have they been slain as their slayers were slain?

The answer is — NO.

THE POINT HERE is the contrast between God's measured dealings with Israel and the utter disaster which would break the adversaries of Israel — and ultimately the kingdoms of man.

God dealt with Israel to the end they would be fruitful. Israel would not die out as did the nations who came against them.

⁸Measure by measure, by exile you contended with them; he removed them with his fierce breath in the day of the east wind.

THIS is the steadfast love of God. God was relentlessly working — measure by measure to rescue His people from the ravages of their idolatry. He contended with their stubbornness. There came a point when He removed them from the land He had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

⁹Therefore by this (by His continued steadfast love) **the guilt of Jacob will be atoned for,**

Proverbs 16:6 (ESV) ⁶*By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.*

In His steadfast love and faithfulness God kept moving toward the day when He Himself would make atonement for sin on the cross.

and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces, no Asherim or incense altars will remain standing.

Turning from idols is the condition and the consequence of atonement. There is no atonement — no forgiveness of sin — without turning from idols. And when your sin is removed you turn from idols to serve the living God.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 (NIV) They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

¹⁰For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness; there the calf grazes; there it lies down and strips its branches.

I believe this fortified city — and the things described in verse 11 — is a reference to the adversaries of Israel

Isaiah 25:2 (ESV) ²For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the foreigners' palace is a city no more; it will never be rebuilt.

But looking out to the end of the age it is judgment against the city of man, against those organizing themselves without God and against God.

¹¹When its boughs are dry, they are broken; women come and make a fire of them.

This takes us back to the imagery Isaiah used in Chapter 10

Isaiah 10:33–34 (ESV) ³³Behold, the Lord God of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. ³⁴He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.

For this is a people without discernment; therefore he who made them will not have compassion on them; he who formed them will show them no favor.

The last two verses tell us the trajectory God has in mind for Israel in His story

¹²In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and you will be gleaned one by one, O people of Israel.

¹³And 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.