
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON XX : THE END OF THE WORLD — PART 2 (25:1-12)

General outline (from Young's *Isaiah*):

- I. The Crisis and the Messiah (1:1-12:6)
 - A. Introduction to the Entire Prophecy (1:1-31)
 - B. Early Messages of Isaiah (2:1-5:30)
 - C. Judah's True Hope: The Messianic King (6:1-12:6)
- II. The Theocracy and the Nations (13:1-39:8)
 - A. Judah and the World Power (13:1-27:13)
 - B. God's Sovereignty Manifested in Salvation and Judgement (24:1-27:13)

Last week we saw the 'world city' destroyed, an awesome description of judgement prior to the Lord ruling in Zion ('*the city of this world and its overthrow*' — chap 24). This chapter picks up where the last left off ('*the response to the overthrow*' — chap 25). ***"Isaiah now reverts to the thought of 24:14, where he had depicted the people as singing God's praises. In 24:16-23 he have the reason why the people sang, namely, the fact that God had triumphed over His enemies and that He reigns eternally. Isaiah himself now joins in glorifying the Name of his God."***

[Young, *Isaiah*] This chapter may be divided as follows: *song of thanksgiving for God's faithfulness in caring for and delivering His people* (v1-5); *God's purpose in the destruction of the earth* (v6-8); *the joy among God's people because of their deliverance* (v9-12).

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago. You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin, the foreigners' stronghold a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. Therefore strong peoples will honor you; cities of ruthless nations will revere you. You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall and like the heat of the desert. You

O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a fenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the

O Jehovah, my God [art] Thou, I exalt Thee, I confess Thy name, For Thou hast done a wonderful thing, Counsels of old, stedfastness, O stedfast One. For Thou didst make of a city a heap, Of a fenced city a ruin, A high place of strangers from [being] a city, To the age it is not built. Therefore honour Thee do a strong people, A city of the terrible nations feareth Thee. For Thou hast been a stronghold for the poor, A stronghold for the needy in his distress, A refuge from storm, a shadow from heat, When the spirit of the terrible [is] as a storm — a wall. As heat in a dry place,

<i>silence the uproar of heat in a dry place; even the foreigners; as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled.</i> (NIV)	<i>heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.</i> (KJV)	<i>The noise of strangers Thou humblest, Heat with the shadow of a thick cloud, The singing of the terrible is humbled.</i> (YLT)
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THE TRIUNE GODHEAD — The doctrine of the trinity weaves in and out throughout the book of Isaiah, one example being here. In this chapter as well as the last we see Jehovah, the most personal name for the Lord, who is said to be coming to reign in Zion (*Lord* is used to translate the Hebrew word *adonai* meaning lord; *LORD* is the reverent manner in which the translators handle the personal name of God). Isaiah spoke of Jehovah's reign: "*For the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously.*" (Isa 24:23). K&D translates 25:1 as follows: "*Jehovah, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee.*" Yet as we turn to the NT it is obvious it will be the Lord Jesus who comes to reign: "*God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.*" (2 Thes 1:6,7) "*While we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2:13) The only manner in which these verses may be reconciled is the doctrine of the trinity.

THE LORD IS A PERSONAL GOD — "*The personal element in this ascription should not be overlooked. The LORD who has executed the judgment depicted in the closing verses of the preceding chapter, and has wrought deliverance for His people, is also the prophet's own God, to whom the prophet may come in confidence. God, who must judge the nations, nevertheless hears the prayers of His people individually. Surely such a God is deserving of praise.*" ... Isaiah acknowledges that the Lord alone is his God. He recognizes no other, and thus is really speaking out against idolatry. He makes a solemn profession of monotheism. The God whom the prophet worships, Yahweh, is his God, and He alone is the one whom Isaiah confesses as God. None other is deserving of his adoration and worship." [Young, *Isaiah*]

THE WONDER-WORKING LORD — "As the text is accented, we should render, *Thou hast done a wondrous thing, namely, counsels, etc. What God has done is a wondrous thing, something that only God could do, a wonder like the miracles in connection with the deliverance from Egypt.*" ... The two Hebrew words used here are the same roots as in Isa 9:6 to describe Christ as '*Wonderful, Counselor.*' The sense is even here the Messiah is not far from the context." [Young, *Isaiah*]

GOD'S ETERNAL COUNSELS — "*His counsels have been from afar, i.e., devised long ago.... What He does is not precipitate nor rash, but is the outworking of His eternal purpose and decrees.* It is faithfulness and certainty, i.e., a perfect faithfulness. The combination of the two words lends force to the statement." [Young, *Isaiah*] "*God's wonders, his amazing acts, are not 'off-the-cuff.' They are part of the divine purpose in the universe....* People make plans feverishly, but all too often they come to nothing. But Isaiah knows a God who, at the right moment, does something which from one point of view is utterly new, but from another is consistent with plans formed before the universe began. This is the only being into whose hands it makes sense to entrust oneself from Isaiah's point of view. No other plan is worth anything." [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD CITY — v2 gives a reason why the Lord should be praised: the destruction of the world city (of course this is only one of His wondrous counsels, an illustration of what the Lord can do). As in chap 24, the writer believes the city to be no one particular city but rather a portrayal of the “world city”, representative of what the NT refers to as “the world” (i.e. “the world system”).

THE PRAISE RESULTING FROM THE DESTRUCTION — “As long as the Gentile nations, represented in Isaiah’s day by the Assyrians and Babylonians, sought to control the world and to incorporate the theocracy within their own kingdom, there could be no hope for their salvation. Babylon and all that it represented must first be destroyed. The ecumenical power of man must be broken, that the nations may learn that the Lord is the God of all the earth, and may praise Him. The destruction of world cities has brought about this result. Now the strong people no longer seek the destruction of God’s city and kingdom; now they honor Him as the true God. They come to Him in obeisance.... *The conversion the heathen is thus brought about in a twofold manner. First, the world cities must be removed; and secondly, there must be a true spiritual turning to God.... This latter is a spiritual work, and is accomplished only by spiritual means, namely, the working of God in the human heart as a result of the effective preaching of the Gospel. How wondrous are the counsels of God! He can change a city into a heap; but greater than that, He can change a powerful people and awe-inspiring nations into those that honor and fear Him. Such a God is truly deserving of praise!*” [Young, *Isaiah*]

ADDITIONAL REASONS TO PRAISE THE LORD — “He is to be honored not merely because he destroys the citadels of the proud, but also because he does so for the sake of the oppressed. In so doing, he becomes a refuge for them. All of this indicates that God’s reason for attacking pride is not merely that it is false in view of his own incomparability (40:6-26), but also because of what it does to other human beings. *Human pride and human well-being are incompatible and God is committed to human well-being.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] God is a *refuge*, a place of protection and comfort, a theme common in the scriptures. Isaiah uses two weather extremes common in the Near East to symbolize God’s protective hand: the *heat* and the *storm*. “In either the sudden intensity of the cloudburst or the steady, enervating heat, life is threatened. Unless one has a stronghold against the flood (cf. Matt 7:24-27) or a shade from the heat, there is no hope.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *God’s intervention is quick, powerful and timely: as a cloud comes between us and the sun to produce moments of coolness, so God interposes Himself in hopeless situations to refresh us and allow us to continue in life.*

<i>On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine — the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe</i>	<i>And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from</i>	<i>And made hath Jehovah of Hosts, For all the peoples in this mount, A banquet of fat things, a banquet of preserved things, Fat things full of marrow, preserved things refined. And swallowed up hath He in this mountain The face of the wrapping that is wrapped over all the peoples, And of the covering that is spread over all the nations. He hath swallowed up death in victory, And wiped hath the Lord</i>
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away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD hath spoken. (NIV) *off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. (KJV)* *Jehovah, The tear from off all faces, And the reproach of His people He turneth aside from off all the earth, For Jehovah hath spoken. (YLT)*

“The focus of attention returns here to the banquet, the atmosphere having been heightened by the hymn of praise in v1-5. The inaugural banquet seems to have been customary in the Near East when a king was crowned. It was a time when the king bestowed favors and sought to establish a favorable tone for his reign. That seems to be the picture here. The subjects come from all over the world to the mountain of the Lord. There they receive the gifts which only God can bestow: the destruction of death and the removal of the sorrow which accompanies it. This is the key to the richness of the feast — it is the food and drink of life (Jn 4:13,14; 6:35,58; 7:37,38).” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

REPRESENTATIVES FROM EVERY NATION — *“The language is all-inclusive. No nations as such is to be excluded from the blessings which the Lord brings.”* [Young, *Isaiah*] *“And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”* (Rev 5:9)

THE LORD’S BANQUET — “As in ancient times (1 Sam 11:15; 1 Kings 1:9,19,25) it was customary after a coronation to sacrifice and to celebrate a sacrificial meal, so also after the Lord takes up His reign in Jerusalem, there is to be a festal meal. It is the Lord, however, who provides the banquet, for all is of His grace. He who makes the feast is designated the Lord of hosts, a phrase which recalls 24:23 where it was stated that the Lord of hosts reigned.” [Young, *Isaiah*] *“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” ’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’ ”* (Rev 19:6-9)

A BANQUET WITH THE BEST — *“What God does for all nations is to make a feast consisting of the best and most choice things that food and drink can offer.* It consists of ‘fat things,’ the plural indicating the choiceness of the food, and its right preparation with all that should accompany it (cp Gen 49:20; Isa 55:2; Jer 31:14; Ps 63:6; Job 36:16; Neh 8:10). By means of gradation Isaiah now characterizes the banquet as one of wine that is matured by resting undisturbed on the lees.... These were the best of the fat things, and were most acceptable in the banquets, as well as in the sacrifices. The wines on the lees would be well filtered and refined. In this feast the best is offered to the nations.” [Young, *Isaiah*]

THE SHROUD OF DEATH — Those who come are *wrapped, covered, shrouded* by something, as a veil over their faces. Most commentators agree the reference is to death. “Before human beings can experience the joy of God’s great feast, something must be done about the universal curse. At the end of every pathway the Grim Reaper awaits us all, and that cold hand blights every human happiness. But God will *swallow* — not merely remove, but envelop in such a way as to destroy — that shroud.... *This is the ultimate deliverance. We may be delivered from want and from oppression, but until we are delivered from death, and the sin which issues in death, all these other deliverances are a mockery; death is the final conqueror.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *“Isaiah*

uses the definite article with death, to stress the fact that it is well known that death has been a terror to mankind. Hitherto, death itself had swallowed up all else. As in Genesis 2:17 so here, the word ‘death’ includes all the evils which attend it. When death is swallowed up, so also are all the miseries that it brings. Furthermore, death is to be swallowed up forever; it will never again reappear. Paul’s interpretation is entirely true to the Old Testament: ‘death is swallowed up in victory’ (1 Cor 15:54b). The book of Revelation brings out the meaning clearly: ‘there shall be no more death’ (Rev 21:4b).” [Young, Isaiah]

TEARS WIPED AWAY — “He is touched by that which rends our hearts, and his purpose, begun in Christ, is to put an end to it all.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

DISGRACE REMOVED — “*Not only did their sin and disobedience bring them shame in the eyes of the nations, but so also did their stubborn faith in God and their refusal to violate their laws.* But in that day, as the nations turn toward Zion, all the shame, failure, and loss will be made up for. In fact, it will be known that the salvation of the world exists only through God’s people. If one is to relate this text to the eschatological teaching of the NT, it may, with caution, be connected to the final ingathering of the Jews forecasted in Rom 11:11-27.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *Now we are mocked and the ‘losers’ of this world. Then it will be known that we knew the truth and tried, though feebly at times, to convince others of the validity of our message. This should encourage us in our witnessing.* I look back to my school days and only remember two real Christians that stood for Christ, both of whom I mocked for their faith. Years later when Christ saved me, one of the first phone calls I made was across the country to one of those men to thank him for his testimony and concern for my soul while I was lost (in fact it took several long-distance calls just to find where the man lived and his phone number, but I just had to tell him the news). Someday you might receive such a call if you remain a faithful witness now.

In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain; but Moab will be trampled under him as straw is trampled down in the manure. They will spread out their hands in it, as a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim. God will bring down their pride despite the cleverness of their hands. He will bring down your high fortified walls and lay them low; he will bring them down to the ground, to the very dust. (NIV)

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust. (KJV)

And [one] hath said in that day, ‘Lo, this [is] our God, We waited for Him, and He saveth us, This [is] Jehovah, we have waited for Him, We joy and rejoice in His salvation.’ For rest doth the hand of Jehovah on this mountain, And trodden down is Moab under Him, As trodden down is straw on a dunghill. And he spread out his hands in its midst, As spread out doth the swimmer to swim; And He hath humbled his excellency With the machinations of his hands. And the fortress of the high place of thy walls He hath bowed down — He hath made low, He hath caused [it] to come to the earth, — unto dust. (YLT)

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMIES OF GOD — “Why does Isaiah introduce such a contrast at this particular point? The answer is that Moab had been an inveterate enemy of Israel, and is here mentioned by way of example to show that the haughty enemies of God’s people will be destroyed. *For God’s people there will be a salvation in which men may boast; for those who have despised God and turned against Him there will be only punishment and destruction. Israel had been despised and looked down upon; now she will be exalted; Moab had been haughty and proud; now she will be abased and brought to shame.*” [Young, *Isaiah*] “It was particularly these neighboring nations which had taunted Judah for her apparently ineffectual trust in Yahweh. They had reproached Judah, but in the last day, the reproach would be all theirs.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “In the land of promise there is rejoicing, but on the other side of the Jordan there is fear of ruin. Two contrasted pictures are placed here side by side. The Jordan is the same as the ‘great gulf’ in the parable of the rich man. Upon Zion Jehovah descends in mercy, but upon the highlands of Moab in His wrath.” [K & D, *Isaiah*]

...WITHOUT HOPE — “The straw has been tramped upon and left to putrefy in the place of dung, but Moab, having been so tramped upon, will spread out its hands to swim.... *The thought seems to be that even as the swimmer is spread out ready to swim, so Moab in its difficult condition attempts to spread itself out that it may swim and not sink. Moab’s attempt fail, for instead of keeping itself afloat and so saving itself, it will cause to bring low its pride, together with the spoils that its hands had acquired.*” [Young, *Isaiah*]

...WITHOUT DEFENSE — The language is somewhat general, and Isaiah is not referring to any particular Moabitish city. The ‘walled cities’ are not effective in protecting the lost from the mighty hand of judgment. *“The same hand which will rest on Zion in blessing will strike Moab down. This is not the result of favoritism or arbitrary pique on God’s behalf. It is the result of two different attitudes. Those who commit themselves to God in patient trust will experience his hand of blessing, shading them from the oppressive heat of the sun, but those who exalt themselves against God in their own self-sufficiency must sooner or later be crushed under that hand (vv11,12; cp also 16:6; Jer 48:29; Zeph 2:10).”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

ALL WILL BE EITHER SAVED OR LOST — There is no other option. Everyone who ever lived will stand before the Lord as either one of His or one who rejected Him. *“For those who refuse to [respond to his invitation], the grim final word is judgment. No one ought to be lulled into apathetic unconcern because of God’s offer of limitless love. Any nation or person must either run with God or run into him. There is no other way. Those who are tempted to ignore vv 6-8 because of God’s soft heart will learn to regret that decision.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] A professor I have in college (who was also a Cincinnati police officer) made the statement once, ‘Once again mercy is mistaken for weakness.’ That is the mistake of many in our society.

“In that day they will say, ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’ ”

— *Isaiah 25:9 NIV*