
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON XXII : THE END OF THE WORLD — PART 4 (27:2-13)

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)

EPILOGUE: ISRAEL'S PLACE IN THE END — “The eschatological-apocalyptic section of Isaiah 24-27 is concerned with God's final purposes in the world. *The prophecies recorded here concern the whole world but they also relate to Israel and her place in the universal purposes of God.* Earlier in these chapters, and especially in chapter 24, the emphasis was placed on the nations as a whole; but there is more and more reference to Israel as the chapters proceed, with chapter 26 almost dominated by her. The chapter ends, however, with a reference to the judgment of the nations, and in chapter 27 we are once again reminded of the international context of God's dealings with his people.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] *“The prophet closes this segment (chaps 24-27) with a collection of materials which both summarizes and illustrates God's sovereignty with respect to Israel and the nations. These are v 2-6, the Lord's vineyard; v7-11, destruction of the Lord's enemies; v12,13, return from the nations.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

The Lord's Vineyard (27:2-6)

In that day — “Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. I am not angry. If only there were briers and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire. Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.” In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit. (NIV)

In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. (KJV)

In that day, ‘A desirable vineyard,’ respond ye to her, I, Jehovah, am its keeper, every moment I water it, Lest any lay a charge against it, Night and day I keep it! Fury is not in Me; Who giveth Me a brier — a thorn in battle? I step into it, I burn it at once. Or — he doth take hold on My strength, He doth make peace with Me, Peace he doth make with Me. Those coming in He causeth to take root, Jacob doth blossom, and flourished hath Israel, And they have filled the face of the world [with] increase. (YLT)

TWO VINEYARDS: ONE MADE BY MAN, ONE MADE BY GOD — “Whether consciously or unconsciously, vv. 2-6 stand over against the picture of the vineyard in 5:1-7. There the vineyard had revealed a fundamentally perverse nature with the result that the farmer had abandoned it to the wild. Here, as there, the vineyard is Israel and the farmer is God. But this picture is on the other side of judgment and depicts a time when the only divine wrath remaining is for those who would threaten Israel’s existence. God has not forsaken her utterly. His care for her has never ceased and now flows unimpeded. While the scene is probably eschatological in its fulfillment, it nonetheless expresses a fundamental truth for all times: *God’s wrath never supersedes his care. Behind the wrath the care continues unabated. It requires only repentance and change to experience it again.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “The repeated phrase ‘in that day’ in vv. 1-2 suggests that the judgment of the enemies of Israel and her own blessing belong to the same general eschatological era. In Isaiah 5, the vineyard is barren and unproductive and is itself threatened with judgment. In the eschatological picture we see here, however, the vineyard is fruitful.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

UNDER THE LORD’S PERSONAL CARE — in contrast to chap 5 where the Lord withholds the rain and dew, here God Himself waters the vineyard moment by moment. “With the subject first, ‘*I, the Lord, am its keeper*’ emphasizes who Israel’s keeper is. *It is not some lesser being, some hireling, but the Lord himself who watches over his own (John 10:11-13).*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “*Jehovah Himself is introduced as speaking. He is the keeper of the vineyard, who waters it every moment when there is any necessity, and watches it by night as well as by day, that nothing may visit it.*” [K & D, *Isaiah*] *We often sense fear and guilt due to our lack of faithfulness; and while there is a proper place for godly reverence, we should also embrace the fact the Lord Himself watches over us.*

THE LORD IS APPEASED — the reason for the change between the vineyard in chap 5 and this vineyard is the Lord’s wrath is satisfied, He is appeased. ‘*I have no wrath, I am not angry*’ = *God’s wrath is propitiated and he is able to look at his people with fatherly tenderness.* “The wonderful statement that opens v. 4 can really be understood only in the light of the expression ‘in that day,’ with which the new parable of the vineyard commences. *The prophet was not describing Israel that then was but the Israel that was to be, when the wrath of God was past* (cf. 40:2).” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] *Make no mistake about it; the Lord is good to us as believers not because of ourselves but because of the atoning blood of His Son. That should humble His people and help us when we begin thinking we’re better than the lost.*

THE LORD WILL DEFEND HIS PEOPLE — ‘*O that there were thorns, briers*’ — again compare with chap 5 where the thorns and thistles overtook the vineyard. *But here the Lord wishes there were some present so he could defend his vineyard from their encroachment.* “The hearer or reader ... with the earlier parable in mind, may well be asking, ‘But what about the briers and thorns?’ These appear in chapter 5 both as part of the judgment of God on the vineyard and as the final evidence of its lack of real fruit. *But here God pledges himself to destroy them should any such appear again to threaten his vineyard. Indeed, he appears eager to do this very thing, perhaps as evidence of his covenant faithfulness to his people and his determination to do them good in every possible way.* In 10:33-34, God goes into battle against the great trees, lopping the boughs from them with his axe. Here the undergrowth feels the shriveling heat of his anger.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

EVEN IN JUDGEMENT UPON THE ENEMIES OF GOD’S PEOPLE, THERE IS AN INVITATION TO REPENT — ‘*Unless they lay hold*’ follows on the statement of God’s actions against Israel’s enemies in v.4. God will march against them and destroy them unless they seek

refuge in him. “In v. 4 the God of battles is marching against the briers and thorns with a flaming torch in his hand. *He is about to set fire to this rank undergrowth, but before doing so he proclaims the alternative of peace. His action against the briers and thorns is for the protection of his people, but in v. 5 the enemies themselves are offered refuge (cf. 25:4) if they will accept his terms of peace. The offer of peace is made most emphatically, with the clause repeated in the Hebrew but with the words in a different order.* This serves the purpose of directing the hearer's attention to the words themselves, and so to their meaning and the offer of mercy they contain.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] The prayer of Habakkuk was: “*In wrath remember mercy.*” (Hab 3:2) This is not to give false security, but *it is never too late to repent.* Having said that however, allow a word of caution: *don't take God for granted!* “*I'll repent later after having my fill of the world*” ... don't you think the Lord is aware of that attitude? The proper balance is the following truth: *'It is never too late to truly repent, but late repentance is seldom true.'*

THE BLOSSOMING OF ISRAEL WHICH WILL BLESS THE NATIONS — “*The prophet here says, in a figure, just the same as the apostle in Rom 11:12, viz., that Israel, when restored once more to favour as a nation, will become ‘the riches of the Gentiles.’*” [K & D, *Isaiah*] “Since God will be Israel's keeper in the last day, supplying her needs and neutralizing her enemies, she will spread out to cover the whole earth (cp also 37:31; Hos 14:5-7).” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “Babylon's plan was to organize the whole world without reference to God. But the Lord has a different intention and one that will be fulfilled.” [Motyer, *Isaiah*] “Verse 6 brings the parable to a beautiful climax.... The figure of the vineyard disappears, and, instead, Israel is presented as a plant. Perhaps the figure of the vineyard contemplates Israel in the land, whereas the vine lays more stress on the people themselves than the Promised Land God has settled them in — although, of course, it is in the land that Israel takes root.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

Destruction of the Lord's Enemies (27:7-11)

<i>Has the LORD struck her as he struck down those who struck her? Has she been killed as those were killed who killed her? By warfare and exile you contend with her — with his fierce blast he drives her out, as on a day the east wind blows. By this, then, will Jacob's guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruitage of the removal of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones to be like chalk stones crushed to pieces, no Asherah poles or incense altars will be left standing. The fortified city stands desolate, an abandoned settlement, forsaken like the desert; there the calves graze, there they lie</i>	<i>Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up. Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches</i>	<i>As the smiting of his smiter hath He smitten him? As the slaying of his slain doth He slay? In measure, in sending it forth, thou strivest with it, He hath taken away by His sharp wind, In the day of an east wind, Therefore by this is the iniquity of Jacob covered, And this [is] all the fruit — To take away his sin, in His setting all the stones of an altar, As chalkstones beaten in pieces, They rise not — shrines and images. For the fenced city [is] alone, A habitation cast out and forsaken as a wilderness, There doth the calf delight, And there it lieth down, And</i>
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<i>down; they strip its branches bare. When its twigs are dry, they are broken off and women come and make fires with them. For this is a people without understanding; so their Maker has no compassion on them, and their Creator shows them no favor. (NIV)</i>	<i>thereof. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favor. (KJV)</i>	<i>hath consumed its branches. In the withering of its branch it is broken off, Women are coming in setting it on fire, For it [is] not a people of understanding, Therefore pity it not doth its Maker, And its Former doth not favour it. (YLT)</i>
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DIFFICULT PORTION OF TEXT AND INTERPRETATION — there are several possible interpretations for the following:

- possibility 1: some (for example, Keil and Delitzsch) take the city of v10,11 to be Jerusalem; the sense being *‘God will, through judgement, bring Israel to the point where they can be restored to the land.’*
- possibility 2: the focus of chapter however is the defeat of Israel’s enemies; therefore some say *God will destroy the enemy within*, i.e. Samaria. That produces difficulties and therefore causes some to divide v7-9 and v10, 11.
- possibility 3: the city of v10,11 is the same city as 24:10-12; 25:2,3; 26:5 which is *a symbol of the world arrayed against God. This view has the advantage of being consistent throughout the entire section and also maintains the thrust of chapter 27 depicting God’s victory over Israel’s enemies.* To do this, v11 must refer to the world at large. The sense therefore is as follows: *“Israel may take root (v6) because the blow which fell upon her was not fatal, whereas that which will fall upon her enemies will be. The chastisement of Jacob sought purification and was so tempered. That of her enemies will be without compassion (cp Jer 10:24,25). The result will be that these nations will no longer be able to hold captive a purified Israel (v12,13; cp 11:10-16; 35:8-10).”* [Oswalt, Isaiah]

ISRAEL JUDGED, BUT NOT LIKE THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE LORD — it is interesting that Isaiah used only two root words in this verse (exception for ‘or’) with each clause having three words derived from the same root. The next verse is also difficult grammatically, as may be seen by the various manners in which it is translated. Oswalt takes the phrase to be *‘by exact measure’*, therefore the sense is: *‘God has carefully measured out judgment of the Exile so that it will not destroy the people but bring them to purification. The punishment is precisely fitted to the crime.’* NIV: *‘by warfare and exile’* KJV: *‘In measure, when it shooteth forth’* YLT: *‘In measure, in sending it forth’* *“If Israel feels unfairly treated by God and wonders how the prophecy of v6 could ever come true, she is invited to compare herself to her enemies, there to discover that they have ultimately suffered worse than she.”* [Oswalt, Isaiah] *“On all such occasions, divine wrath could have exacted a full penalty from Israel but forbearance intervened — and even when the major exile came, it was cushioned with the promise of return. Chastisement was truly his fierce blast, never negligible, for divine wrath is real and divine standards non-negotiable.”* [Motyer, Isaiah]

A MERCIFUL ATONEMENT — *“This verse tells why Israel’s punishment was not on the same order as that of her enemies. Hers was for the purpose of discipline and purification (54:6-*

8; Heb 12:11).” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *“He was angry, but not without love; He punished, but only to be able to pardon again....* With the word ‘therefore’ a conclusion is drawn from the expression ‘by measure.’ God punished Israel ‘by measure;’ *His punishment is a way to salvation: therefore it ceases as soon as its purpose is secured;* and so would it cease now, if Israel would thoroughly renounce its sin, and, above all, the sin of all sins, namely idolatry.” [K & D, *Isaiah*] *“By this’* looks back to the point just made: the Lord has ever acted with restraint, preserving his people when they merited death.” [Motyer, *Isaiah*]

FAITH BRINGS FORTH GOOD WORKS — *Isaiah (as well as the bible as a whole) so combines faith with the results of faith that they are often used interchangeably.* “The ‘altar’ represents all expressions of religion authorized by the Lord, and ‘poles’ and ‘incense altars’ stand for illegitimate and imported religious usages. *First, then, there will no longer be need for an altar for sacrifice (Heb 10:12,18) and Jacob will acknowledge this by even grinding its stones to pieces like so much chalk. Secondly, the atonement will purge out erroneous religious practice.* [Motyer, *Isaiah*]

THE OPPRESSORS’ END — “If it is correct to take the city here as the symbol of Judah’s oppressors, then the thought continues the idea of redemption. *When Israel’s idols are broken down, then God’s hand will be revealed against her enemies,* who are in fact more idolatrous than she. The result will be complete desolation, as that once mighty city becomes a pasture field, or a once-spreading tree whose limbs are now stripped and dead.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] The browsing animals leave bare twigs, but even they disappear as firewood.

FINAL JUDGMENT WITHOUT MERCY — “‘Compassion’ is typically the love of a mother for her child. ‘Favour’ is ‘grace’, the undeserved kindness of God (Gen 6:8; Ps 51:1). ‘Creator’ is ‘Potter’, ‘he who moulded them’ (Gen 2:7). *This richness of maternal love is forfeited by sin — specifically, that of the mind failing to exercise its power to perceive, grasp and hold the truth.*” [Motyer, *Isaiah*] Cp the NT’s teaching towards those who reject Christ: ‘Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died **without mercy** on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **How much more severely** do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” **It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**’ (Heb 10:28-31 NIV)

The Ingathering of Israel (27:12,13)

<i>In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the</i>	<i>And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt,</i>	<i>And it hath come to pass, in that day, Beat out doth Jehovah from the branch of the river, Unto the stream of Egypt, And ye are gathered one by one, O sons of Israel. And it hath come to pass, in that day, It is blown with a great trumpet, And come in have those perishing in the land of Asshur, And those cast out in the land of Egypt, And have bowed themselves to</i>
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*holy mountain in and shall worship the LORD in Jehovah, In the holy mount —
Jerusalem. (NIV) the holy mount at Jerusalem. in Jerusalem! (YLT)
(KJV)*

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL — “*God promises that there will be a great harvest at the end of time and that each one of his righteous ones will be gathered in.... ‘A great trumpet’, like the raising of an ensign, is a sign of the final ingathering. It is not necessarily any more literal than the ensign; it is merely an evocative figure. But literal or figurative there will come a moment in the end of time when God will call his own to him.... This prophecy can hardly be fulfilled merely by there being Jews living in Jerusalem. Rather, God’s people will be fully restored when they worship him on the holy mountain. Perhaps this must await the final consummation, but it is a day devoutly to be hoped for.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “Here [in v12] the prophet refers to the traditional boundaries of the Promised Land. God will treat this whole large area as one huge grain field. Never through out its history did a pure Israel exist. There were always foreign and unbelieving elements in it, the two not always coinciding. God’s judgment would therefore begin at the land of his own people. If his threshing-floor yields much grain, there will be chaff too.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] “The Euphrates and the brook of Egypt ... were the north-eastern and south-western boundaries of the land of Israel, according to the original promise (Gen 15:18; 1 Kings 8:65), and it is not stated that Jehovah will beat on the outside of these boundaries, but within them.” [K & D, *Isaiah*]

GATHERED IN TENDERNESS — They will be gathered ‘one by one’, the picture being that of each one scattered being gathered individually with tender care.

“I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. I am not angry. If only there were briers and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire.”

— Isaiah 27:3,4 NIV