

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THEME:

Coming—the Great Tribulation!

REMARKS:

We need to keep in mind the major divisions of Isaiah given in the outline at the beginning.

From chapters 1 to 35 the theme is JUDGMENT.

We are in this section although we have come to another subdivision. From chapters 13 through 23 we saw God's judgments upon the surrounding nations and upon Israel itself. Much of this is largely fulfilled.

From chapters 24 through 35 we come to a new section although judgment is still the theme. The next few chapters of this section are entirely future. Both Delitzsch and Jennings consider it thoroughly eschatological. Some have labeled the next few chapters "the little apocalypse."

Delitzsch further states:

The particular judgments that we have been following in the preceding 'Burdens' all flow into this last judgment as into a sea; and all the salvation that formed the shining edge of the oracle against the nations is here concentrated in the glory of a midday sun. These chapters form the 'finale' to chapters 13 to 23, and that in a strictly musical sense: what the 'finale' should do in a piece of music, namely, gather up the scattered changes into a grand impressive whole, is done here by this closing cycle.

The judgments against the different nations were like rivulets and they came together in chapter 24 as a mighty torrent of destruction moving at flood stage. The entire earth is involved in this judgment.

The word "earth." or its equivalent, Hebrew *erets*, occurs 18 times in this chapter. The word translated "land" is the same word which is the Hebrew *erets*. Dr. Ironside takes the position that the earth in this chapter refers to the land of Israel. Delitzsch and F.C. Jennings take the position that the whole world is involved. There is an element of truth in both it seems to us. It involves the whole world but centers in the land of Israel. There is another position which confines it to the prophetic earth—that is, the old Roman Empire.

The earth itself is involved in the sin of man. Our race sprang from the earth and is still bound to it. **“The first man is of the earth, earthy”** (I Corinthians 15:47), and **“As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy”** (I Corinthians 15:48).

And unto Adam he said. Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying. Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Genesis 3:17-19).

There will come a day when a people, called out of this earth, shall be delivered from the earth, its confinement and its contamination. **“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly”** (I Corinthians 15:49). Hallelujah!

- Esau was of the earth, “red,” **“a man of the field.”**
- Jacob became Israel, a prince with God, **“a dweller in tents.”**

A little ray of light breaks into this chapter as we see a company who **“glorify the Lord in the fires.”** Their song is drowned out in the Great Tribulation.

OUTLINE:

1. **The Great TRIBULATION Is a World-Wide JUDGMENT FROM GOD.** Verses 1-12
2. **Tribulation SAINTS Are PRESERVED Through the Great Tribulation.** Verses 13-15
3. **The Great TRIBULATION Is a Time of UNIVERSAL and Unparalleled Suffering.** Verses 16-21
4. **Tribulation SAINTS Are RAISED from the Dead.** Verses 22-23

COMMENT:

Verse 1—**Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.**

“Earth” (Hebrew *erets*) could mean here either the land of Israel or the whole world. The whole world conforms better to the context in this chapter. The words of destruction, **“empty”** and **“waste”** remind us of a former judgment in Genesis 1:2, **“without form and void.”**

In the first judgment, the physical earth was contorted. In the future judgment, the judgment centers upon the inhabitants. The first had nothing to do with the sin of man. The future has everything to do with man.

It will prove enlightening to read in this connection:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10).

Verse 2—**And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.**

“**The priest**” certainly relates the judgment to Israel, as they alone had a God-given priesthood. The judgment begins in Israel and moves out to all the world. The judgment reaches every class and condition of society.

Verse 3—**The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word.**

The judgment is from God and it is worldwide in extent. All the pleasures and interests of men are removed. Shakespeare has Hamlet to say, “How stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me the uses of this world.” That is the thought in this verse.

Verse 4—**The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.**

The earth was originally a Garden of Eden. Then the curse fell and thorns appeared on the roses; weeds amidst the fruit. In that day the earth will fade like a flower. All beauty will be gone then. Why? The next verse offers the explanation.

Verse 5—**The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.**

“**The laws**” here are not confined to the Ten Commandments. “**The everlasting covenant**” should be carefully examined. Let us not make the mistake of assuming it refers to the Mosaic Law. That was temporary, not everlasting, as Paul states in Galatians 3:19.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The time word “**till**” limits the Law. It could not be the covenant which God made with Abraham, since this was a God-made covenant and man could not break it.

The covenant referred to is the covenant made with Noah in Genesis 9:8-17.

This is called an everlasting covenant in verse 16 and is made with “**all flesh that is upon the earth**” as stated in verse 17. This is a covenant of Grace, and the nations of the earth have spurned and rejected it. This further identifies the Hebrew word *erets* as referring to the entire earth.

Verse 6—**Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.**

God promised Noah that He would never destroy the earth again with a flood, note here that the judgment is fire—“**burned**” (Read II Peter 3:10, also II Peter 3:6-7).

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Peter 3: 6-7).

Verse 7—**The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh.**

Wine is the source of joy. All joy is gone.

Verse 8—**The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.**

Music is the expression of joy. All joy is gone.

Verse 9—**They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.**

Wine, women and song are not the pastimes of the Great Tribulation.

Verse 10—**The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in.**

“**City of Confusion.**” The Hebrew word for confusion is *tohu*.

This is the same word in Genesis 1:2 which is translated “**without form.**”

Verse 11—**There is a crying for wine in the streets all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.**

Verse 12—**In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.**

This is a poetic picture of the stark reality of destruction.

Verse 13—**When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.**

So few shall be preserved in ratio to the total inhabitants it will be as a few olives left after the harvest and the gleaning of grapes.

Verse 14—**They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea.**

Verse 15—**Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea.**

The remnant, though small, will lift their voices in praise to God for His deliverance.

He is again the God of Israel.

Verse 16—**From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.**

The songs are drowned out now because of the wailing brought about by the intensity of the suffering. When the prophet sees the awful character of the destruction of the Great Tribulation he cried out as Dr. Jennings translates it, “*my misery, my misery.*”

Our Lord described this period in just as striking language.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened (Matthew 24:21-22).

Verse 17—**Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.**

Three dangers are upon the inhabitants of the earth:

- (1) “**Fear**”—there is no freedom from fear here.
- (2) “**Pit**”—is danger of death.
- (3) “**Snare**”—is deception.

And Jesus answered and said unto them. Take heed that no man deceive you (Matthew 24:4).

Verse 18—**And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.**

If a person escapes death he will be deceived. In that day it will be better to die than to live.

Verse 19—**The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.**

Read again II Peter 3:10.

Verse 20—**The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.**

Dr. Ironside suggests that this verse refers to earthquakes.

Verse 21—**And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.**

Revelation 19:19 through 20:3 needs to be read here in connection with the remainder of this chapter.

“In that day” identifies this with the period beginning with the Great Tribulation. The Lord will judge the kings of the earth when He comes to set up His kingdom, **“the kings of the earth upon the earth.”**

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-32).

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (Revelation 19:15).

Verse 22—**And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.**

This refers evidently to the resurrection of the Tribulation saints who are included in the first resurrection at the coming of Christ to the earth.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

Verse 23—**Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.**

Now nature responds to the King who has come to rule.

~ end of chapter 24 ~

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