

LESSON 6: PUNISHMENT FOLLOWED BY KINGDOM BLESSING (24-27)

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

As a result of studying this lesson you should be able to

- describe the contents of Isaiah 24–27 as it relates to the outline given in the Supplement.
- explain how Isaiah relates a near-future judgment with the judgment in the book of Revelation.
- list Paul’s and John’s use of Isaiah 25:8.
- explain the place of 26:1–19 in the Millennium.
- compare Israel as the vine in Isaiah 5 and 27

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read chapters 24–27 in Isaiah.
2. Read and study the Supplement for this lesson.
3. Answer the Study Questions.
4. Take the Self-Check Quiz.
5. Secure a proctor for Exam 2. You will find the procedure for doing so in the Syllabus at the beginning of the study guide.
6. Review the lesson objectives. When you are confident that you have met them, proceed to the next lesson.

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SUPPLEMENT

This section has been called by some commentators "Isaiah's little apocalypse." In apocalyptic prophecy the prophet was allowed by God to witness the future spread out as a panorama. Thus, he visually experienced what would/will come to pass. Outstanding examples of apocalyptic prophecies in the Scriptures are found in Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and, of course, in the Apocalypse, the book of Revelation.

Isaiah's repetition of themes has been noted several times, particularly the repetition of the two major themes of judgment and comfort. In chapters 24-27, the same sequence that is continually encountered in this book is seen again. It seems as though God would convince His people by sheer force of repetition. In fact, this is the order of life, and it is found in other places as well as in Isaiah: first suffering, then glory. So it was with our blessed Lord Himself: "Seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:11). It is the same with believers:

If indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17).

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you (1 Peter 5:10).

The outline of this section may be connected to that of the whole book in this way:

- I. Punishment Followed by Kingdom Blessing (24:1-27:13)
 - A. Troubles Followed by the Reign of the Lord of Hosts (24:1-23)
 - B. Praise of God for His Wonderful Works (25:1-12)
 - C. A Song of Salvation (26:1-19)
 - D. God's Indignation and the Regathering of Israel (26:20-27:13)

TRoubles FOLLOWED BY THE REIGN OF THE LORD OF HOSTS (24:1-23)

At the beginning of chapter 24 the prophecy turns away from the burdens (God's grievous judgments on the Gentile nations) to God's own people. The judgments that are coming on Judah will be such as to empty the land (v. 3). The same Hebrew word can be translated either "earth" or "land." Here it seems to refer to the land of Israel rather than to the worldwide devastation pictured in Revelation and other passages of Scripture.

The immediate reference is undoubtedly to the Babylonian conquests and the transmigration of the population according to the custom of that day. All classes of the people will suffer. The passage makes it clear that these judgments are retributive—that God is taking vengeance for the sins of His people (v. 5). The capture and desolation of Jerusalem is most emphatically included in the judgment (v. 12). The prophet Jeremiah, who lived a century after Isaiah's time and through the terrible period of the Babylonian invasions, elaborates on some of those prophecies.

Even in the midst of grievous afflictions there will be those who will glorify the Lord "in the fires" (v. 15 KJV). That is the response of the godly remnant, so different from the general populace, but always present in any era.

This is obviously a prophecy of the Babylonian conquest and captivity, but that captivity manifestly does not exhaust its full import, for the prophet looks ahead to "that day" (v. 21). The catastrophic disruptions on earth and the signs in the heavenly bodies seem to go far beyond the Babylonian desolations, terrible as those were to be. There is undoubtedly a foreshadowing of those cataclysmic judgments that are to overtake the "earth-dwellers" in the end time, described so graphically in the book of Revelation.

That this double fulfillment is in view seems to be conclusively shown by the allusion to the reign of the Lord of hosts on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem (v. 23). The glorious kingdom age will be a time of rejoicing and praise to God for the

people of God, both the glorified saints of all ages (including the church) and the as yet unglorified subjects of the millennial kingdom, including living Israel of that day and a great multitude of Gentiles (Matt. 25:41).

PRAISE OF GOD FOR HIS WONDERFUL WORKS (25:1-12)

The contemplation of God's literally earthshaking works brings forth an exclamation of praise: "O LORD, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name; for Thou hast worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness" (v. 1).

It is important to observe the harmony of the Old and New Testaments. In this chapter are found examples of Old Testament teachings that are carried over into the New Testament and amplified there. Verse 8 is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:54, and the second clause of verse 8 is restated in Revelation 7:17 and 21:4.

In "that day" God's people will be glad they waited for Him (v. 9). That is indeed a contrast to the impatience of the restless world. Patient waiting is the difficult but sublime appointment for God's people. It will not always be so. The day of waiting, interminable though it sometimes seems, will have an end; the day of rejoicing in God's completed salvation will be eternal.

A SONG OF SALVATION (26:1-19)

The song of praise that begins chapter 26 will be sung "in that day," that is, in the kingdom age when it will be completely appropriate. Now it cannot be sung in its full meaning. Thankfully, however, a timeless application can be made now or at any time. No matter in what period of history he lives, the believer can find in God the perfect peace described in the song (v. 3). Note that the Hebrew idiom is: "in peace, in peace," correctly rendered by the English translators as "in perfect peace" (KJV, NASB, NIV). It would be interesting to trace the many hymns and gospel songs that have been based on that passage. Frances Havergal's hymn "Like a River Glorious" not only draws on the verse indirectly in its first stanza, but goes on in its refrain to paraphrase the verse:

Stayed upon Jehovah hearts are fully blessed,
Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest.

Perhaps best known of all is Augustus M. Toplady's immortal hymn "Rock of Ages" (written in 1776), with its title taken from the literal rendering of the Hebrew in verse 4: "For in Yahweh is the Rock of ages."

GOD'S INDIGNATION AND THE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL (26:20-27:13)

The indignation mentioned in this passage (26:20) is the Day of the Lord, mentioned so many times in the Prophets. In that period of judgment the godly remnant of Israel will be protected (cf. Rev. 12:1-12). The church, raptured to meet the Lord Jesus (1 Thess. 4:16-18), will be *kept out of* the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 3:10); the godly remnants of Israel will be *kept through* the Tribulation.

The punishment of the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity (v. 21) is described in considerable detail in the book of Revelation.

The mention of the vineyard in 27:2-6 portrays a different set of circumstances from the song of the vineyard in chapter 5. The prediction that Israel "will fill the whole world with fruit" (v. 6) is similar to Paul's exclamation in Romans about the blessing that will come on the world when Israel is restored:

Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ... For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Rom. 11:12, 15).

Chapter 27 closes with a description of the regathering of Israel, a gathering such as the world has not seen. This is undoubtedly the same regathering mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:31:

And He will send forth His angels with a *great trumpet* and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other [*italics added*].

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STUDY QUESTIONS

These Study Questions are purely optional and designed for the student who wishes to go beyond what is required. *Do not send them to Moody Distance Learning for evaluation.*

1. Relate the themes of suffering the glory to the Christian experience. What should the believer's response be to each of these?
2. The Supplement states that the "song of salvation" in chapter 26 has a timeless application to believers. Read the chapter and record your devotional thoughts on the passage.
3. Find the two hymns mentioned in the Supplement ("Like a River Glorious," and "Rock of Ages"). Compare Isaiah 26:3-4 with these hymns, and record your thoughts.

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SELF-CHECK QUIZ

The Self-Check Quizzes are designed to prepare you for the exams in this course. *Do not send these tests to Moody Distance Learning*, because they do not comprise any portion of your grade.

Read the following statements, and label each corresponding blank *true* or *false*. After you have completed this quiz, compare your answers with the answers in the key at the end of the study guide. To help prepare more fully for the exams, determine why the answer to any question is *false*, and what fact(s) would make the statement true. Take time to read any material you did not completely understand before going on to the next lesson.

1. The section that has sometimes been called "Isaiah's little apocalypse" is found in chapters 24-27 of Isaiah. _____
2. The descriptions of the coming Babylonian invasion sometimes looked ahead to the judgments in the book of Revelation. _____
3. The "song of salvation" will be sung in the millennial kingdom. _____
4. In the future, the godly remnant of Israel will be preserved through the tribulation period. _____
5. Outstanding examples of apocalyptic prophecies in the Scriptures are found in Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation. _____
6. Even in the midst of grievous afflictions there will be those who will glorify the Lord "in the fires." _____
7. The glorious kingdom age will include only the glorified church-age saints and Israel. _____
8. Isaiah presents the order of life: first glory, then suffering. _____
9. The mention of the vineyard in Isaiah 27:2-6 portrays a similar set of circumstances to the song of the vineyard in chapter 5. _____
10. The regathering of Israel in Isaiah 27 is not the same regathering mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:31. _____

OBJECTIVES

As a result of studying this lesson you should be able to

- describe the contents of Isaiah 28–33 as it relates to the outline given in the Supplement.
- explain how God judged the northern kingdom.
- relate the messianic title of Christ as the Cornerstone to other Scripture passages.
- describe God’s judgment on the nations mentioned in Isaiah 28–33.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read chapters 28–33 in Isaiah.
2. Read and study the Supplement for this lesson.
3. Answer the Study Questions.
4. Take the Self-Check Quiz.
5. Review the material from Lessons 3–7.
6. Take Exam 2.
7. Move on to the next lesson.

As he carries out further the general theme of judgment, the prophet of God pronounces a series of “woes” on Israel and Judah particularly. It will be helpful to compare this series with other pronouncements of woe in other parts of Scripture. One such is the castigation of the Pharisees by the Lord Jesus Christ with its sevenfold “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Matt. 23:13–15, 23, 25, 27, 29; cf. also v. 16).

Another is the series of terrifying woes in the end time, at the blowing of the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets in Revelation (Rev. 8:13).

Consider this outline:

1. Pronouncement of Woes (28:1–33:24)
 - a. Woe to Ephraim (28:1–13)
 - b. Warning to the Rulers of Judah (28:14–29)
 - c. Woe to Jerusalem (Ariel) (29:1–24)
 - d. Woe to the Egyptian Alliance (30:1–31:9)
 - e. The Righteous King Who Will Deliver (32:1–20)
 - f. Woe to Assyria (33:1–24)

WOE TO EPHRAIM (28:1–13)

The northern kingdom is addressed as Ephraim because of the dominance of that tribe over the other tribes in the kingdom during much of Israel’s history.

This prophecy is addressed to the city of Samaria, which Omri had built and made the capital of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 16:24). The city was situated on a high hill overlooking a beautiful and fruitful valley. Other glimpses of it in the Prophets show its splendor and luxury. Samaria was soon to be destroyed by the Assyrian invaders. The reference to the “drunkards of Ephraim” (v. 1) is similar to the charges made against Israel by other prophets, especially by Amos (Amos 6:1–14) and Hosea (Hos. 4:1–19). Those two prophets ministered directly to the northern kingdom. Amos’s ministry was shortly before Isaiah’s time, and Hosea’s overlapped with Isaiah’s. Note also that Micah, although

ministering primarily to Judah as Isaiah did, began his work with a reference to the fall of Samaria (Mic. 1:5–7).

The fulfillment of the woe on Ephraim was not long in coming. Even as Isaiah spoke, Ephraim’s flower was fading (v. 1). Assyria was about to conquer and destroy the northern kingdom.

The Bible frequently stresses the evil of drunkenness (Prov. 20:1; 23; 29–35), viewing it not as a weakness to be pitied but as a sin to be condemned. The sin was particularly heinous because it was the sin of those in places of leadership who needed clear heads for governing.

It is important to be alert to the interweaving of events in the prophet’s day and the allusions to future messianic times. The expression “in that day” (v. 5) seems to indicate its complete fulfillment in the time when Christ will be reigning. The reference to the Lord as a “glorious diadem to the remnant of His people” appears also to look forward to the future deliverance and blessing.

Priests and prophets (v. 7), who are especially supposed to give people help from God, were unable to help because they, too, were engulfed in the universal sin of drunkenness (v. 7). This is a very sad description of the conditions of the time.

The people resented bitterly the prophet’s admonitions to them and mocked his methods. They felt that he was treating them like children (vv. 9–10). “Very well,” he replied, “God will have to instruct you through men who speak a different language—obviously through the Assyrian invaders” (v. 11).

WARNING TO THE RULERS OF JUDAH (28:14–29)

The prophecy has now shifted from Samaria to the southern kingdom, as is clear from verse 14. This paragraph presumably condemns the Egyptian alliance, although some commentators take it to refer to the pro-Assyrian party. Whatever the details, there were parties and factions in Judah favorable to each of the