

Notes Isaiah 24-25

David H. Linden, August, 2021

Here are some of the most delightful words in the Bible. If they were located in the Psalms, the words would be better known. It is regrettable that the writings of the prophets are less familiar than other parts of the Bible. We read again of two cities; by now we know that Babylon is the other city, the one opposed to God, though Babylon is not mentioned here by name. From the covenant people and the world, people come to the Lord, people described as *near* and *far off* in Ephesians 2:13,17 and Acts 2:39. In these two cities there is a contrast; one city is without life and meaning; in the other every need is met.

24:1-3 The earth devastated The Lord lays waste the earth, but this section does not say why. By repeating contrasts like ‘master & servant,’ it shows everyone is affected in this judgment by the Lord. It is also the earth that suffers, not just man who lives on it. When man sinned the ground was cursed (Genesis 3:17-19). The creation still waits for redemption (Romans 8:18-25), because man’s sin affects man’s environment. The inhabitants are scattered, the same word used of the scattering at Babel in Genesis 11:4,8,9. The world cannot be united when it is against God; man cannot set up a cohesive society when he is in his sin and under the judgment of God.

24:4-6 The curse on the earth The earth withers because it is polluted by man whom God made to be lord over it (Genesis 2:8-20; Psalm 8). Man has defiled the earth 1) by rejecting truth (God’s torah, i.e. instruction); 2) by altering God laws, (making his own morality); and 3) breaking covenant. Sadly, moral pollution is not the kind the world complains about.

Curse vs. Blessing Man is a covenant breaker. God’s blessing is to the covenant keeper. In v.6 man receives the curse of a covenant breaker. (See Deuteronomy 28:15.) This is man’s problem. The gospel is that salvation came by God sending a covenant keeper, our Lord Jesus Christ. Like Adam, Jesus represented His people. Just as Adam’s sin brought guilt and condemnation, so Christ obeyed for us and brought justification and life (Romans 5:12-21). On the cross Christ took our curse, so we could have from God the blessing his death and covenant keeping has merited for us (Galatians 3:10-14).

24:7-12 Life without meaning Man may try to prop up his life with the support of song and alcohol. Both may be used to dull the mind to reality. Eventually the emptiness can be hidden no longer. The desolate city is better translated ‘formless,’ as in Genesis 1:2 where the earth was without form and void. (See also Jeremiah 4:23.) That word described the world before light, before the creation of the things that sustain life. Barred doors indicate fears arising from the uncertainties of life in a wicked city, fear that always comes when there is no fear of God. Sadly in this situation where the old way of life has not worked, men know no other way, so in their trouble they cry out for more wine; they turn again to failed remedies. The song of the world is gone.

24:14 A different kind of song In the midst of this desolation and despair there is music. In the former section the music was chiefly instrumental. Instruments can play even if the heart is sad. But here the song is the human voice! It is even loud because the heart is in it. There is joy. This is a tremendous contrast. The background is one of a complete destruction of the earth and its inhabitants (vv.1-3). In Noah’s day the flood was on all mankind, yet Noah and his family found grace in the eyes of the Lord. So here judgment on the entire world does not stop the saving grace of God reaching into all the earth.

24:13-16 Gleaning (v.13) always follows harvest. The gleaners do not get the harvest, only what is left. Here the gleanings represent a worldwide song of joy from east and west. In the days of Solomon they had a fleet of ships which brought from distant places shipments of ivory, apes and baboons (1 Kings 10:22). They were aware of distant islands, which they referred to as “the ends of the earth” (NIV) or “coastlands” (ESV). (See 42:4). One does not naturally expect gleanings to be a large quantity. But God turns this expectation

around. We find an earth ringing with the praise of God from west to east. From the ends of the earth it can be heard. Out of a lifeless formless earth of vv. 1-12 comes a new creation. God has said again, “*Let light shine out of darkness*” to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). In Isaiah 24 they sing, “*Glory to the Righteous One*”. (It is an important evangelistic environment that the world should hear Christians sing glory to the Lord.)

The Righteous One Almost every time “the righteous” is used in the Bible it refers to righteous men. Rarely is it used of God, but when it is, it usually refers to Christ. It was Jesus that Paul met on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. God had chosen Paul to see “the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth” (Acts 22:14), which happened when he received the gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12). John too calls Jesus, “Jesus Christ the Righteous One” in 1 John 2:1. So I suggest that the redeemed of west and east sing to Christ, the Righteous One. Sinners with no righteousness of their own give glory to the One Who is righteous in himself, and who has become righteousness for them (1 Corinthians 1:30). They can be heard from one continent to another. In a devastated world there is salvation.

24:16c-18d Isaiah’s suffering It is good to see again that the man of God does not take God’s judgment on others lightly. He too feels the weight of it, even using the same woe language he did of himself in chapter 6. The first woe was for his sin, the second he felt for the sins of others. He grieves over one repeated example, treachery, which results in a judgment from which men cannot escape. (See also 21:3,4 and 22:4.)

24:18e–20 Judgment from above and below In Noah’s day, the windows of heaven opened to express God’s wrath. Here it is coupled with an earthquake. The combination is deliberate wrath from above and destruction from within. The hut is blown by external forces; the drunkard stumbles from internal lack of equilibrium. This is the result of sin. Sins’ effects are internal and lead to death as in James 1:13-15. Sins’ judgment is also external from the judicial hand of God; as in Romans 6:23, sins’ wages are meted out by God. The guilt of sin in v.20 is simply rebellion, so the earth will fall never to rise again. The end of Jeremiah’s very long oracle against Babylon was that it would sink to rise no more (Jeremiah 51:64). In chapter 24 Isaiah will speak of a city without using the word Babylon. It is no longer needed to make his point. Judgment falls on the world characterized by the same spirit as old Babylon.

24:21-23 A new day coming This is the first time in this section we read of “in that day”. It appears some 7 times in Isaiah 24-27 – here and 26:1; 27:1,2,6,12,13. The prophecy is moving toward the end, and the end is good. To reach a true resolution, the spiritual powers of evil in the heavens are put down. They are the original rebels and instigators of our rebellion. Never forget Satan was a rebel who tempted our first parents to become rebels like him (Ephesians 2:2; 6:11,12).

The exact time, as is the case so often, is not specified. It is “in that day” and also “after many days” in v.22. When God has hidden (Acts 1:7), we submit. He has spoken, so it is sure. Even now some wicked angels are bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day (Jude 6).

Isaiah does not mind placing the glory of God’s just judgment beside the glory of his rule over all the earth in Zion. Jesus’ face shone like the sun in his transfiguration (Matthew 17:2). The day of glory will be so bright, so opposite the darkness of the earth that the sun and moon will hide their face. Theirs is an inferior radiance.

The rebellion of all those nations that hated Mount Zion and the king God placed there will fail (Psalm 2). There is no doubt who the Son of David is in the Bible. God will bring about all these things at once:

- 1) The restoration of everything (Acts 3:21).
- 2) His presence among them in Zion.
- 3) All nations living joyfully under his king in Zion (v.14).
- 4) Christ’s enemies as His footstool (Psalm 110:1) or, to use the language of v.22, “*prisoners*”.

5) Never again will a shameful idol replace the true glory of Israel.

In the New Jerusalem there is no need for the sun; its place will be taken over by the Lord Himself (Revelation 21:22-27). The sun and moon will hide their face humbled by the glorious presence. The wicked “*will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed*” (2 Thessalonians 1:9,10).

Isaiah 25 Rejoicing in Salvation

25:1-5 The section begins with individual confession and praise of the Lord, “*You are my God.*” In v.9, it will be the praise of all in unison. God’s marvelous wonders are supernatural just as the word “wonders” is used for miracles in the New Testament (Hebrews 2:4). This power and the emphasis on God’s faithfulness show that salvation is of the Lord. God sets out a wonderful banquet (v.6), but the first praise to him is for deliverance from a foe. The other city is in ruins. Yet strong and ruthless people in this world, such as Cush in 18:7, have been made to fear God. And the poor find refuge in the Lord. The trouble they face is pictured as a storm and the heat of the sun. From these the Lord is both shelter and shade (32:1,2). As easily as a cloud relieves from the heat, God delivers His people from hostile foreigners.

25:6-8 Now for God’s city – whatever God does is related to this mountain, Mt. Zion. In an earlier oracle the Arab refugees lack food and water (21:13-15). Here God provides a banquet. The food is the best. It is for all peoples, all nations, and all faces! As in Revelation 7:9, Salvation has come to every ethnic group, every political entity and every believing individual. These peoples (plural) are then spoken of as “His people” (singular in v.8). Those who believe become one people, full-fledged children of Abraham (Galatians 3:28,29).

The salvation is not merely from a human enemy, or from the spiritual powers in the heavens above (24:21); it is also from death. Isaiah looked forward to the time when our Lord would swallow up death. He contrasts locales, people and results. In this text he is not making a prediction as to the place of the crucifixion. It is still the case that Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection happened on that same location, on this mountain. There and then, just outside Jerusalem, He swallowed our death in his (1 Corinthians 15:50-57), and removed our curse from us by making it his. In a day still future, he will remove the experience of death from his own and tears from every eye (Revelation 21:1-4).

25:9-12 Each one will say the same confession, “*This is our God.*” It is a confession of faith, “*We trusted in him, and he saved us.*” Thus the work of salvation was all God’s. This trust is not turned back to the one with faith; it looks to the Lord to save. Faith does not look in. This salvation is the real thing and so there is joy rather than uncertainty. Any time we add anything to faith for God to accept us, such as our obedience, there is a serious distraction from and contradiction of the gospel. If anything other than a receptive faith is made out to be the faith required for justification, it will bring on doubt and remove joy. A loaded-up faith in contrast to a simple unassuming faith replaces boasting in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31) with boasting of self (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Notice the hand of the Lord rests on his mountain. His hand is down, at rest, no longer raised in judgment (note 10:4). God’s hand was raised against Christ on the cross, and so for his own it is now at rest (v.10). Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

Poor Moab does not trust; she clings to her pride. She would not come to the House of David on Mount Zion for mercy or help in Isaiah 15/16, so she epitomizes the plight of the proud. Moab is excluded from the banquet. The contrast could not be more vivid. She has no seat at the banquet table; instead, she is trampled

in the manure. Her reaction, so typical of her pride, is to save herself by swimming out of it. It will not work; it is God himself who humbles the proud (James 4:6). God has one city and will have one people, those who confess Jesus, the Son of David, as Lord and believe in him to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. The glory of man returns to dust, so Moab's walls will not even be a ruin but leveled. Had Moab turned to the Lord, she would have been welcomed at the table of fine food and had the shroud of death removed (vv. 6,7). God's hand of blessing was on Mt. Zion and his foot on Moab. One has eternal life and the other, eternal perdition.