

LESSON 7

JUDGEMENT OF THE WORLD
AND WARNINGS TO JUDAH

Isaiah 24:1-33:24

Introduction

Chapters 24 through 27 are frequently called the "Isaiah Apocalypse." They do have some apocalyptic features, such as universal judgement, an eschatological banquet, the imprisonment of the heavenly host, and the resurrection of the dead.¹ Other scholars conclude that the section is not apocalyptic because it does not contain some of the major motifs of apocalypse, such as pseudonymity, the use of visions and cryptic numbers, the symbolizing of world powers as ferocious animals, the reinterpretation of early prophecies, and theological dualism. Bernhard Duhm argued that the section is a collection of apocalyptic forecasts of the end of the world and the establishment of divine rule on Mount Sinai.² He dated the material in the late second century B.C. Few scholars have followed Duhm's view. Some have placed it in the eighth century B.C. as the work of the great prophet Isaiah, while others have placed it in the fifth century during the Persian rule.

S.R. Driver said that this section is "remarkable on account of the width of area which the prophet's imagination traverses, the novelty and variety of the imagery which he employs, the music of language and rhythm, ...and the beautiful lyric hymns in which the redeemed community declares its gratitude."³ The section contains one of two definite Old Testament references to the resurrection of the dead (see 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2).

The second section, chapters 28 through 33, contains a group of discourses dealing with the relation of Judah to Assyria. The discourses are woes and warnings to Judah.

¹See John Bright, "Isaiah," Peake's Commentary on the Bible, edited by Matthew Black and H.H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962), p. 506.

²Das Buch Jesaja (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1902).

³An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892), p. 211.

Isaiah 24-27 is frequently called the "_____."

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Match:

1. Apocalyptic features found in Isaiah 24-27.
2. Apocalyptic features not found in Isaiah 24-27.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ___ a. visions | ___ e. world powers |
| ___ b. universal judgement | ___ f. theological dualism |
| ___ c. cryptic numbers | |
| ___ d. eschatological banquet | |

(1-b, d; 2-a, c, e, f)

List three Old Testament references to the resurrection of the dead.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Isaiah 25:8, Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2)

God's Judgement on the Nations

Isaiah 24:1-23

The announcement of judgement (24:1-3).—These verses picture the total devastation of the world, including the physical, social, and economic orders. The prophet predicted that the whole earth would be made desolate and would return to chaotic form. Every individual, whether significant or unimportant, would be judged, and the inhabitants would be scattered (v. 1). Judgement would come upon every person regardless of the status of his position in life—priests, common people, slaves, masters, merchants, bankers, and debtors (v. 2). The verification that the judgement would come to pass is expressed in the words "for the Lord hath spoken this word" (v. 3).

The judgement on nations would be extensive. People of every _____ would be judged. All _____ of the _____ would be included.

(status, judged, nations, earth)

Justification of judgement (24: 4-13).—Nature itself suffered because of the sins of the inhabitants of the earth (v. 4). The cause of judgement was the pollution of the earth by its inhabitants, for they had transgressed laws, violated statutes, and broken the Covenant (v. 5). If the oracle was addressed to Israel, the "everlasting covenant" perhaps refers to the one ratified at Sinai. If the judgement includes all the earth, the "everlasting covenant" may refer to the one God made with Noah. Since the flood is implied throughout the passage, perhaps the oracle is directed to the whole world. Verse 6 appears to recall the experience in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve sinned, the earth was cursed. Since the sins of the people had polluted the whole earth, God placed a curse upon it, and all its inhabitants would suffer because of their guilt (v. 6). The curse would be the burning anger of Yahweh which would leave few inhabitants on the face of the earth as in the days of the flood. The punishment would bring an end to all joy, even during the time of harvest and the making of new wine (v. 7). Feasting and drinking would be neglected, and even the wine would taste unpleasant (v. 9). The meaning of the destruction of the city of chaos is uncertain (v. 10). Perhaps the expression refers to the city of Jerusalem which would be broken down. Duhm identified the city as Samaria, Lindblom as Babylon, Eissfeldt as the capital of Moab, and John Bright as a hostile alien city rather than Jerusalem. The city would become desolate, with its houses closed and none to enter the gate, and its walls would be battered into ruins (v. 12). The city of chaos may represent any great worldly city which heads up a kingdom of this world and defies Yahweh.

The cause of judgement was the pollution of the earth by its inhabitants, for they had t _____ l _____, v _____ s _____, and b _____ the c _____.

(transgressed laws, violated statutes, broken, Covenant)

In as few words as possible, state the meaning of Isaiah 24:10.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Survivors of judgement (24:14-20).—A few people who survived the judgement of the earth would recognize the greatness and majesty of Yahweh and sing praises to His Name (v. 14). They would sing in anticipation of their deliverance from a worldly tyrant. It appears that the survivors would be the remnant, the elect of God, who would flee to the promised land. The elect would be scattered over the earth (vv. 15-16). The mood of joy was interrupted by a sigh of sorrow as the prophet remembered the fearful judgement which

Underline the correct word or words. God's elect remnant (would not, would) survive the judgement.

(would)

was yet to come (v. 16). Because the sins of the earth were great, there would be no escape. He who fled from disaster would fall into the pit or would be caught in the snare (v. 18). Judgement would be so severe upon the earth that it would be utterly broken, torn asunder, violently shaken, and left staggering like a drunken man (vv. 19-20). Judgement would be severe because the transgressions were heavy.

Judgement in heaven (24:21-23).—The apocalyptic language becomes more obvious with a pronouncement of punishment upon the hosts of heaven. The underlying concept is the struggle of the High God against a rebellion in heaven, Yahweh's conflict with rebellious angels and their earthly representatives (kings). The enemy will be defeated and imprisoned in the dungeon (v. 22). "In that day" (the Day of the Lord), final judgement will bring punishment upon the enemies of Yahweh (v. 22). After the Lord has completed His judging of the rulers of the earth and the hosts of heaven, He will be enthroned as King on Mount Zion and will manifest His glory before the elders (v. 23). The concepts of this section are repeated in the Gospel accounts of the Last Day and in the Book of Revelation.

Praise to God
Isaiah 25:1-26:6

A song of thanksgiving (25:1-5).—This Scripture reminds one of the Psalms. It praises Yahweh for His mighty acts in defending the poor and needy against the ruthless (v. 4). After Yahweh has gained victory over an alien city, even the people of ruthless nations will recognize His glory and will fear Him (v. 3). His greatness, primarily His power to destroy, will be extolled. Yahweh has the power to bring His plans to completion and victory. Perhaps verse 5 makes reference to the wilderness journey when Yahweh's presence with His people was a cloud by day to shade them from the sun.

The eschatological banquet (25:6-9).—The prophet describes a celebration feast for Yahweh's enthronement in Jerusalem after He has gained victory over all the earth. All people will be invited to the feast (v. 6). The banquet will mark a time of great joy. The covering which has prevented the people of the earth from recognizing Yahweh and His purpose will be removed and death will be destroyed (vv. 7-8). With the elimination of death and suffering, all tears will be wiped away, and the reproach which came from captivity will be removed (v. 8). Yahweh's people, who previously were mocked by Gentile nations because their God was either unable to deliver them from the enemy or was punishing them openly, will no longer be ashamed and humiliated (v. 9). Judah's God will be manifested as the victor over other nations and gods instead of the victim of more powerful nations and gods. The long-awaited day will bring salvation and rejoicing to the people of God. This message gives a background to the Messianic Banquet mentioned in the New Testament (see Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 19:9).

List 4 disasters on earth that tell us how severe judgement will be.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Underline the correct word or words.

The rebellion of the hosts of heaven seems to refer to rebellious angels and their earthly representatives or kings. These rebels (will not be, will be) imprisoned in a dungeon and (blessed, judged) in the Day of the Lord.

(will be, judged)

True or False?

The eschatological banquet is a celebration feast for Yahweh's enthronement at Jerusalem as king after He is defeated by the enemy.

(False)

The humiliation of Moab (25:10-12).—The spirit of the previous passage is reversed in the oracle against Moab. Moab is singled out as a special object of doom. The historical circumstances requiring special judgement are unknown. Perhaps Moab had taken advantage of Judah during a time of affliction. While blessings will come to Mount Zion (Jerusalem) because of the hand of the Lord, trials and sufferings will be the lot of Moab which will be trodden down like straw that is trampled into the mud and dung of oxen near the feeding trough (v. 10). Moab will attempt to escape from the foul waters of the dung-pit, but her efforts will be in vain (v. 11). Moab's fortified cities will be destroyed (v. 12).

A song of trust in Yahweh (26:1-6).—The Lord who has been enthroned in Jerusalem can be trusted to keep the city safe from the enemy (v. 1). Because of His presence, the gates which ordinarily were kept closed when people of other nations approached could be opened to them (v. 2). In the Day of Yahweh, a righteous people who survive judgement will live by faith in Yahweh who will establish them for ever and will make their city unassailable. Righteousness and trust in Yahweh are essential for the people's security.

An Expression of Faith
Isaiah 26:7-21

A prayer of entreaty and trust (26:7-19).—Those who live righteously express confidence in the uprightness of Yahweh (vv. 7-8). Since most of the nation had followed a course of unrighteousness, the people had experienced God's punishment in the form of His forsaking them and leaving them defenceless before invading armies. Nevertheless, the righteous remnant knew that Yahweh is upright and His judgement just (v. 8). The righteous man has no need to fear God but yearns for His presence (v. 9). If God had not sent His wrath upon the wicked, the righteous man would not be able to depend upon Him (v. 10).

The prophet interprets God's punishment of Judah as His teaching the people to live righteously. Righteousness is learnt only when God's punishment is manifested against unrighteousness. The righteous could not conceive of the wicked's prevailing in God's world. The faithful worshippers see the hand of the Lord lifted against the wicked, but they do not see that Yahweh will protect His people from their enemies (v. 11). Since the wicked do not see and respect God's zeal for His people, they will attack them but will be defeated by the fire of Yahweh's enmity. The prophet believed that not only would Yahweh protect His people but He would bestow peace and prosperity upon them (v. 12). He recognized that all the works in Israel's history had been performed by the Lord. In the previous age, the people had many masters who led them astray, but in the New Age they will recognize only Yahweh as their Master (v. 13). The wicked who led them astray have died; they will not arise for the life in the New Age (v. 14). In the New Age, the borders of Israel

Rewrite the following statement to make it correct.

Moab is singled out as a special object of blessing.

(Moab is singled out as a special object of doom.)

In the Day of Yahweh, r _____ people who survive j _____ will live by f _____ in Yahweh. R _____ and t _____ in Yahweh are essential for the people's security.

(righteous, judgement, faith, Righteousness, trust)

Rewrite the following statement to make it true.

God's purpose in punishing the unrighteous was to teach them to live for themselves; so God forsook them and left them defenceless before invading armies.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

How does the prophet interpret God's punishment of Judah?

(The prophet interprets God's punishment of Judah as teaching the people to live righteously.)

will be enlarged as in the days of David (v. 15). The previous age of suffering and trial eventually will give birth to the New Age of glory and joy (vv. 16-18).

The analogy of a woman in childbirth is used to describe Israel's suffering and weakness. In contrast to the wicked dead who will not live again, the righteous dead will live: their bodies will rise (v. 19). This verse contains the earliest reference in the Bible to the resurrection and is joined only by Daniel 12:2 as clear references to it. Previously, future hope was in a continuation of the nation rather than the restoration to life of those who died. The bodies of the righteous dead which lie in the dust (the grave) will awake and shout for joy because of their resurrection. The righteous dead will share in the joys of the new earth.

Suffering before victory (26:20-21).—A time of affliction will come upon the land before the righteous are vindicated. The people of God are instructed to enter their houses and close their doors because of the war which will rage for a little while (v. 20). The outcome of the battle has already been determined, since the Lord will go forth to punish the evil inhabitants of the earth (v. 21). Nature itself will manifest the wrongs which have been committed, and the earth will refuse to receive the bodies of the slain wicked.

The Day of Yahweh
Isaiah 27:1-13

Triumph of Yahweh (27:1).—In the Canaanite creation story, one of the chief gods killed the dragon of chaos (symbolized by the turbulent waters of the sea). From the body of the defeated dragon, the chief god created the world. Leviathan, a many-headed monster, symbolized the evil of the world in opposition to God. The prophet used the Leviathan symbol to emphasize the final triumph of Yahweh over evil (see Ps. 74:14; 104:26). In Jewish exegesis, the sea monster became identified with Satan. Isaiah spoke of Yahweh's punishing Leviathan, the fleeing, twisting serpent and dragon of the sea (the defeat of chaos and evil). When Leviathan is destroyed, Yahweh will rule without a foe to capture and afflict His people.

The symbol of the vineyard (27:2-6).—The vineyard is used to represent the people of God. In the earlier song in 5:1-7, Israel was described as a worthless vineyard, but here she is described as a pleasant vineyard (v. 2). Apparently Isaiah was talking about the righteous remnant of Israel which had been purged by God's judgement. The vineyard described in chapter 5 lacked fruitfulness, even though the Lord was its keeper, and deserved judgement and destruction. The righteous remnant as the vineyard will be protected from harm and nourished by Yahweh (vv. 3-4). The righteous remnant will be obedient and faithful to Yahweh and will produce fruit (vv. 5-6).

The meaning of Israel's suffering (27:7-11).—A number of questions are raised concerning God's

What new promise does Isaiah 26:19 contain?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Rewrite the following statement to make it correct.

Leviathan, a many-headed monster of the Canaanite creation story, which symbolized evil of the world became identified with the nation of Assyria.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

In Isaiah 5:1-7, what does the vineyard represent?

In Isaiah 27:2-6, what does the vineyard represent?

(sinful Israel, the righteous remnant)

treatment of Israel. Apparently some Israelites questioned God who treated them like He treated the pagan nations (v. 7). As the chosen of God, they had not expected exile or famine, which were caused by the fierce east wind (v. 8). If they were God's people, why was His punishment upon them as severe as that upon their enemies? The implication of the answer is that Israel had not been as severely punished as her enemies. She had fared better than Assyria and Babylon which were blotted out. The purpose of her punishment was to expiate her guilt incurred by worshipping idols (v. 9). The later prophets interpreted Israel's defeat and exile to be the results of her turning from Yahweh and worshipping idols. Through her defeat, Israel would learn that the idols could not deliver her; therefore, when restoration came the people would not offer sacrifices to Asherim (v. 9). Israel's fortified cities and the idols whom she worshipped were not sufficient to protect her from the invaders. Israel must destroy the pagan altars in her land; otherwise, the fortified cities would be left without divine protection and would become deserted and forsaken. (v. 10). The people were warned that if they continued in idolatry, their cities would continue to be desolate and without Yahweh's favour (v. 11).

The gathering of Israel (27: 12-13).—The section concludes with a reference to the coming Day of the Lord when the loyal remnant of Israel would be separated from the heathen and gathered to her God. People would be gathered from the far northwestern area of the River Euphrates as well as from Egypt which was in the opposite direction (v. 12). The great trumpet would be the signal for the people of God to assemble about His tabernacle to worship. The blowing of the trumpet came to signify the beginning of the New Age (see Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16; and Rev. 8:2ff.).

Warnings to Judah

Isaiah 28:1—33:24

Most of the material in this section relates to the Assyrian crisis during the reign of Hezekiah. The material is presented as a series of woes.

Ephraim condemned and Judah warned (28:1-29)

The contrast of leadership (28: 1-13).—Ephraim was led by drunken, proud princes (v. 1). Perhaps this oracle was given just before the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. At that time, Ephraim is described as being like a fading flower; it had passed the time of its beauty. The Lord would use one who was mighty and strong to bring about Ephraim's downfall. The land would be devastated. The invading army is compared to a storm with hail and flooding (v. 2). The drunken leaders of Ephraim were no match for the invading army (v. 3). When the king of Assyria saw Ephraim, he would devour it like a hungry man devours the first figs which ripen at the beginning of the season (v. 4).

Underline the correct word or words.

Some Israelites questioned God who treated them as He treated the pagan nations. Isaiah answered this by reminding them that Israel's punishment (had, had not) been as severe; the purpose of her punishment (was was not) to expiate her guilt, and her punishment (would, would not) teach her (not to, to) depend on idols.

(had not, was, would, not to)

What is the main theme of Isaiah 27:12?

(The loyal remnant of Israel would be separated from the heathen and gathered to God.)

Yes or No?

Would Ephraim's beauty fade and would she be devoured by Assyria. _____

(Yes)

In contrast to the failure of Ephraim's leaders, victory will come in the Day of Yahweh when He will lead the remnant of His people (v. 5). Instead of drunkenness and irresponsibility, the reign of Yahweh will bring glory and justice (v. 6). There will be no need for the drunken priests and prophets whose minds were confused by wine and who stumbled in giving moral and political advice (v. 7). The repulsiveness of Israel's religious and political situation is described vividly as a table filled with vomit from the drunken diners (v. 8).

Judah was admonished to use the fall of Samaria as a warning of God's judgement against evil. Israel had been unteachable. When Isaiah rebuked the northern leaders, they were offended that he should treat them as children (vv. 9-10). They mocked him for monotonously repeating the lesson as a school master (see v. 10; "line upon line, line upon line," etc.). Isaiah became infuriated and replied with irony (vv. 11-13). Even though the simple lesson that deliverance would come only by trusting in Yahweh had been taught frequently, the people had not learnt; therefore, they would be taught by strangers—the alien tongues of the Assyrian and Babylonian armies demanding surrender. The Lord had taught Israel that rest comes by giving rest to the weary, but they had not listened (v. 12). Therefore, they would discover that Isaiah's "precept upon precept" was not empty monotony, but his teachings were from the Lord who would bring them to pass (v. 13). Their stubbornness would result in captivity and punishment.

The Covenant with death (28:14-22).—Like the leaders of Samaria, the leaders of Jerusalem also scoffed at the words of Isaiah (v. 14). During the 705-701 B.C. revolt against Assyria, Hezekiah made an alliance with Egypt. Isaiah opposed it and predicted that Jerusalem's dependence on Egypt would result in her destruction. Jerusalem's covenant with Egypt was her covenant with death, for Egypt would be unable to prevent the scourge of the Assyrian army when it passed through the land (v. 15). Isaiah pointed out that Jerusalem's protection rested in Zion—the power of Yahweh (v. 16). Judah's God had the power to give her deliverance or bring about her defeat. Disloyalty to Him assured defeat. Faith in Him would bring stability (v. 16), but dependence on an alliance would result in death (v. 18).

Other nations did not have the power to resist the army of the Assyrians which would come like a rolling flood, sweeping away whatever stood before it (v. 18b). The Judaeen cities would attempt to stand against the invading host, but the Assyrians would afflict the land day and night (v. 19). The proverb of verse 20, "The bed is too short on which to stretch out, and the blanket is too small to wrap oneself in" (NASB), described the intolerable situation the alliance with Egypt had created. Verse 21 refers to David's defeat of the Philistines at Mount Perazim and at Gibeon with the help of Yahweh. The Lord fought on the side of

Read the next paragraph also before doing the following exercise.

Place an X after the statements that tell how Israel and Judah responded to Isaiah's teachings.

1. Israel repented in sackcloth and ashes. _____
2. Israel mocked him for monotony. _____
3. Judah's leaders ordered a fast. _____
4. They were offended that he should treat them as children. _____
5. Judah scoffed at his work. _____

(2-X, 4-X, 5-X)

Why was it unwise for Judah to form an alliance with Egypt?

(Egypt would be unable to prevent the scourge of the Assyrian army when it passed through the land.)

His people at that time, but their sins had later forced Him to fight against them (v. 22).

A parable from the farmer (28:23-29).—The farmer uses the wisdom he has received from God to prepare properly the soil, plant the seed, and harvest and grind the grain. He does not go on endlessly repeating the same activity, but he follows progressively the natural steps in producing a crop (vv. 24-25). The farmer would not succeed if he plowed his field continually and never sowed the seed. Since he had been instructed by God, he knew how to plant the different kinds of seed and how to harvest and thresh the different fruit (vv. 25-28). The same Lord who has given knowledge to the farmer is in control of history and directs it with a purpose and towards a goal (v. 29). Yahweh's plan was for Israel to move through definite stages in accomplishing His goal. Yahweh refused to repeat continually the same stage.

Yahweh's lament for Jerusalem (29:1-24)

The distress and deliverance of Ariel (29:1-8).—Ariel was a special name for Jerusalem, the city where David encamped (v. 1). Ariel probably meant altar of God; therefore, the prophet used the term to place emphasis on the sacrifices during feasts. Even though the people went through the forms of religion, the city would be besieged by the Assyrians and would experience great distress (v. 2). After a lengthy siege and the people had been brought so low that their voices appeared to come from Sheol, the city would be visited by Yahweh (vv. 4-6). The inhabitants would become hopeless because of the multitude of ruthless soldiers surrounding the city, but the hour would come when the enemy would be removed quickly (vv. 5-6). The city would be saved by God's sudden visitation. After the deliverance, the siege would seem like an empty dream which had passed away (v. 7). The enemy of Jerusalem, which laid siege to the city with visions of conquering and looting her, would be turned away empty. The foe was compared to a hungry man who dreams of feasting but awakes to find his hunger not satisfied or a thirsty man who dreams of drinking but awakes to find that his thirst is not quenched (v. 8).

Superficial spirituality (29:9-14).—The prophet compared the spiritual stupor of the people to the condition of a man too drunk to know what he is doing (v. 9). The prophet believed that the world originated as God's creation and continues under God's power; therefore, he attributed to God everything that happened, including Israel's spiritual blindness (see v. 10). The prophets held also that man is free and responsible; therefore, man carries the blame for his spiritual blindness. If God withheld His revelation from the prophets and seers, the people would be without knowledge of God's will and purpose. The prophets served as the eyes of the people and the seers as the heads of the community (v. 10). The prophets were unable to discern the message from the Lord (v. 11a). The Law of the Lord had been neglected to the extent that

As you read this page, tell whether the following statements are true or false.

1. *Yahweh who directs history planned for Israel to repeat continually the same stage.* _____

(1. False)

2. *Ariel probably meant altar of God; therefore, the prophet used the term to place emphasis on the sacrifices.* _____

3. *The city would be saved by God's sudden visitation.* _____

(2. True, 3. True)

4. *The prophet believed that the world originated as God's creation but did not continue under God's power.* _____

5. *The prophet held that man is free and responsible.* _____

6. *God withheld His revelation from prophets and seers, thus the people were without knowledge of His will and purpose.* _____

7. *The Law of the Lord had been neglected so long that it could no longer be understood.* _____

(4. False, 5. True, 6. True, 7. True)

it could no longer be read with understanding (vv. 11b-12). After paying lip service and worship to Yahweh for a long time, the people were unable to distinguish between external, superficial ritual and genuine, sincere worship (v. 13). The leaders who trusted in their own cleverness while they repeated rituals in an empty, formal manner would be brought to confusion (v. 14). Woe was pronounced upon those who attempted to hide their plan to conspire against Assyria while ignoring Yahweh. The creature is not to deny his Creator and to question the intelligence of his Maker.

Woe upon Israel's counsellors (29: 15-16).—The third woe of this section was against those who made treaty with Egypt. They thought their actions were hidden from Yahweh (v. 15). The prophet rebuked them sharply by using an analogy of a potter and his clay. The thing made could not say to the potter that "he did not make me," nor could it say of its maker that he had no understanding (v. 16).

Israel's transformation in the New Age (29: 17-24).—Verse 17 has been given two interpretations. Some scholars believe that it concludes the preceding oracle of judgment, an interpretation reflected in the New English Bible: "The time is but short before Lebanon goes back to grassland and the grassland is no better than scrub." Other scholars favour the translation of the Revised Standard Version which speaks of the restoration of the land in which the forests of Lebanon become fertile fields and the fertile fields a forest. The following verses describe the Golden Age in which restoration is promised to Israel whose destruction was described in the previous section. The predicted restoration was partially fulfilled in 538 B.C., but the promises of the Golden Age have been projected for fulfilment in the consummated Kingdom of God.

Verses 10 and 11 state that the Lord had given to the people a spirit of deep sleep and had blinded their eyes to the prophecy which then became like the words of a sealed book. According to verse 18, the spiritually deaf and blind will have their hearing and sight restored in order that they will be able to perceive the word of the Lord. The meek—those who have surrendered the control of their lives to the Lord—will experience joy in the Lord, and the poor will exult in "the Holy One of Israel" (v. 19). On the other hand, the wicked will be brought to nought and cut off from the land (v. 20). In the New Age, righteousness will prevail, and ruthless and unjust leaders will be destroyed. When the nation turns in faith to Yahweh, the people will no longer be ashamed because they will be blessed by Yahweh instead of existing as a rejected people (v. 22). In that day, even the deceived in spirit will come to an understanding of truth, and the rebellious will accept instruction (v. 24).

Condemnation and restoration (30:1-33)

A woe against those who enter alliances (30:1-7).—Once again Isaiah denounced the alliance of Judah with

After paying lip service and superficial worship to Yahweh for so long a time, the people were unable to distinguish between e _____, s _____ r _____ and g _____, s _____ worship.

(external, superficial ritual, genuine, sincere)

Read the remainder of this page before doing the following exercise.

List five characteristics of the New Age.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(1. The land will become fertile; 2. Israel will be restored; 3. The deaf and blind will be healed; 4. The meek will experience joy; 5. The wicked will be judged; 6. Righteousness will prevail.)

Egypt and pointed out the futility of depending on Egypt (v. 1). There were two reasons for Isaiah's opposition to the alliance: the leaders of Judah made their plans without consulting the Lord (vv. 1-2); Egypt's help would prove to be worthless (vv. 3-5). The people trusted more in Pharaoh than in Yahweh. The prophet warned that this course of action would lead to shame rather than assurance (v. 3). A second oracle (vv. 6-7) repeats the theme of the first. Verse 6 describes the dangerous and difficult journey of the envoy that made its way across the desert country to Egypt with expensive gifts for negotiating the alliance. After endangering their lives and spending their wealth, they would find that Egypt could not help them.

A recorded proof (30: 8-17).—The prophet was instructed to record his message in order that the people would know that the prediction, when it came to pass, was from Yahweh who keeps His word. The message points out the error of their depending on alliances with other nations (v. 8). The rebellious people were determined to follow their own way and refused to listen to Yahweh's instruction given through His servant the prophet (vv. 9-10). They were open to receive only the words which they wanted to hear from the false prophets (v. 10). They were unwilling to listen to the message of "the Holy One of Israel" which was given through Isaiah (v. 11). Since the word of God had been rejected, those who sought success by oppression and treachery would experience disaster, like the collapse of a wall or the smashing of a potter's jar (vv. 12-14).

After the alliance failed, the written oracles of Isaiah would prove the accuracy of his prophecy that Israel's salvation and strength lay in her repentance, quietness, and trust in Yahweh (v. 15). However, the rebellious people continued to trust in their ability to deliver themselves (v. 16). They thought that swift horses which they purchased from Egypt for military purposes would make them invincible, but they would find that the enemy had swift horses also. Isaiah scoffed at their false security and retorted that one enemy soldier would be able to chase a thousand troops of Judah, and five soldiers would put the entire nation to flight (v. 17). After the battle had ended, Jerusalem would appear as no more than a flagpole on top of a mountain or a signpost on a hill.

Future restoration (30: 18-33).—The exiles who longed for the Lord would find Him to be gracious and merciful (v. 18). Yahweh had sent oppression and suffering upon the people of Judah because of their rebellion. He would no longer hide Himself from those who trusted in Him (v. 19). Apparently, the message was given to encourage the people of Jerusalem who were experiencing great adversity (v. 19). Yahweh was not reluctant to bless them but waited to bestow His grace until they turned to Him in repentance and petition. He yearned to have pity on the people, but their sin had required Him to give them "the bread of

From the list below, find and underline two reasons for Isaiah's opposition to alliance with Egypt.

1. *Egypt would receive all the glory for the victory.*
2. *Egypt's help would be worthless.*
3. *Isaiah did not want Judah to win the battle.*
4. *Judah's leaders had made plans without consulting the Lord.*

(2, 4)

Rewrite the following statement to make it correct.

Isaiah predicted that Judah would be put to flight, but Jerusalem would be saved.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Yes or No?

Would the people of Jerusalem be required to turn to Yahweh in repentance and petition, and become responsive to His work, and walk in His way before they would be restored?

(Yes)

adversity, and the water of affliction" (v. 20). Their situation would be reversed when their hearts became responsive to His word and they began to walk in His way (v. 21). Once their hearts became responsive to God's words through the prophet, they would destroy the images and idols. Then they would enjoy the blessings of Yahweh in the form of rain and abundant harvest (vv. 22-23). Spiritual regeneration would bring natural restoration, and the earth would produce bountifully (vv. 23-25). The mountains, which were usually dry, would be watered by flowing brooks in the day when the people turned from idolatry, destroyed idols, and worshipped Yahweh.

The subject shifts from the New Age and blessings for Judah to divine judgement for Assyria. The name of Yahweh (His presence and power) is represented as coming from afar (v. 27). Yahweh is a transcendent God; He was not limited to being Judah's God but could judge other nations. His tongue is like a consuming fire, and He controls all people as a bridle controls a horse (vv. 27-28). He can use the natural elements of fire, storm, and disease as rods by which He punishes nations (vv. 30-31).

As Yahweh executed judgement, the terror of the Assyrians would be matched only by the joy of the Israelites who celebrated the Holy Days with singing and gladness of heart (v. 29). The sacrificial altar of verse 33 (a burning place) may have been the Valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem where sacrifices were made to Molech. Molech was the name of the pagan deity, but the word was also a derisive way of writing the Hebrew word for king (melek).⁴ By this play on words, the prophet was stating that the sacrifice to be made upon the altar was not to be to Molech, but, instead, the great melek himself (the king of Assyria) would be the sacrificial victim. "The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle" the funeral pyre on which the king's corpse would be placed (v. 33).

The weakness of the Egyptians (31:1-9)

Again woe was pronounced on those who relied on Egyptian alliances and military equipment (horses and chariots) for victory instead of trusting in the Lord (v. 1). The Egyptians could not help since the Lord had already pronounced judgement upon the evil Israelites who did not look to Yahweh (v. 2). He is God, but they were mere men whose horses were flesh (v. 3). The men of Judah were required to choose between reliance on God and man, between spirit and flesh. Even though Judah gained Egypt's assistance, Egypt herself would stumble, and those who relied on

⁴See Page H. Kelley, "Isaiah," The Broadman Bible Commentary, ed. by Clifton J. Allen, 12 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), 5:239.

In your own words, explain briefly Isaiah 30:22-23.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Yahweh is a t _____ God; He (was, was not) limited to being Judah's God but (could not, could) judge other nations.

(transcendent, was not, could)

her would fall (v. 3). Only the Lord of Hosts had power to give protection to Zion and Jerusalem. Perhaps the analogy of the lion's clutching its prey no matter how hard the shepherd tries to frighten him away signified Yahweh's determination to hold Jerusalem firmly in His grasp even though the actions of the people tempted Him to turn away (v. 4). Isaiah compared the Lord's protection of Jerusalem to hovering birds and admonished the Israelites to return to faith in Yahweh (vv. 5-6). In the New Age, every man will cast away his idols which his sinful hands have made (v. 7). Isaiah was very specific in pointing out that Judah's greatest sin was turning to idols and away from faith in Yahweh. As long as Judah's back was towards Yahweh, the Assyrians would prevail. The sword of men could not defeat the Assyrians, but God, whose Spirit had the power to create the world, could defeat the Assyrians without a sword (v. 8). The Assyrian troops would flee before God's powerful spiritual weapon (v. 8). Since Yahweh's weapon of fire resided in Zion, any nation which attacked His people would perish in the Lord's fiery furnace (v. 9).

Isaiah compared the Lord's protection of Jerusalem to h _____ b _____ and admonished the I _____ to return to f _____ in Y _____.

(hovering birds, Israelites, faith, Yahweh)

Further oracles of condemnation and hope (32:1-33:24)

The promise of righteous leaders (32:1-8).—

Although the figure of the messianic king is not clearly presented, the promise is given that a righteous king will rule one day (v. 1). The messianic implication does not specify one king but rather future kings of righteousness and integrity. The righteous rulers would provide protection from the elements for their people, would not be blinded by bribery, nor closed to the word of the Lord (vv. 2-3). When a righteous king and the princes come to power, they would become protectors and sources of blessings. Moral blindness would be removed from the land. The chronic complainer would learn restraint since there would not be widespread abuse about which to complain, and the timid would no longer fear to speak (v. 4). The wicked would not be exalted nor the impious be called noble (v. 5). The fool is described as godless, calloused, dishonest, and ready to take unjust advantage of the weak (v. 6). He is known by the folly of his speech, the iniquity of his thoughts, and the ungodliness of his deeds, especially the mistreatment of the poor and needy (v. 7). In contrast to the fool, "the noble man devises noble plans [thoughts]; and by noble plans he stands" (v. 8, NASB).

List three changes that would come to Judah under the righteous rulers.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- (1. Moral blindness would be removed.
2. The land would be without abuse.
3. The wicked would not be exalted.)

A warning to complacent women (32:9-14).—The passage is similar to Isaiah 3:16-4:1. Perhaps the prophet was addressing the women who were attending a vintage feast (ingathering of the grapes). He described them as complacent; they had been living in comfort and prosperity but would face oppression and suffering within a year (vv. 9-10). Since the vineyard would fail and the harvest would not come, the women who had been at ease would shudder and mourn (v. 11). The fields would be made barren, perhaps by an invading

army, and the women would not find sufficient food to produce milk for their infants (v. 12). Not only would the vineyards be destroyed, but the people would be removed from the land which would grow up with thorns and briars (v. 13). The palace would be forsaken, the populous city deserted, and the watch towers of the vineyards would become habitats of wild animals (v. 14).

The outpouring of the Spirit (32:15-20).—The Spirit, who hovered over the chaotic mass in the beginning to bring order to the world, will once again transform the mistreated world, and the fields will become fruitful for the benefit of God's people (v. 15). In the transformed or new world, justice and righteousness will prevail (v. 16). Peace, quietness, and security will surround God's people as a result of righteousness (vv. 17-18). The defeat of Assyria is referred to as the crashing down of the forest and the laying low of the city (v. 19). After the defeat of Assyria, peace would return to the land, the men would sow their crops beside the streams without fear of failure or the drying up of the waters (v. 20).

The tribulations and triumph of Judah (33:1-24).—The woe oracle of verse 1 is followed by laments (vv. 2-4, 7-9). After the prophetic responses to the laments (vv. 3-5, 10-12), the literary style changes to liturgy and an oracle of salvation (vv. 13-16, 17-24). The chapter opens with a curse oracle pronounced against a foe (perhaps Assyria which became representative of oppressors) for dealing treacherously with the Lord's people (v. 1). The foe was reproached for attacking and plundering without excuse and for violating a treaty (see vv. 1, 7-8). The occasion of the oracle may have been Assyria's demand for unconditional surrender after Hezekiah's submission in 701 B.C. The people of God responded by praying for deliverance (v. 2). The Lord's manifestation in thunder recalls the experience at Mount Sinai when the people were frightened by the "thunders and lightnings, and... the trumpet exceeding loud" (Exod. 19:16). The thunderous noise of the Lord's rising would cause the enemy to flee (v. 3). The sudden fleeing of the Assyrian troops would result in an enormous booty being left behind (v. 4). The abandoned spoil would be ravished immediately by plundering bands (v. 4).

The caterpillar, which develops into a locust, was noted for its destruction. The Lord's destruction of the Assyrian host demonstrated His power and caused Him to be exalted in the thoughts of those who recognized Him (v. 5). Israel's God, who ruled on Mount Zion, would prevail over idols and bring justice, righteousness, stability, deliverance, wisdom, and knowledge to those who feared Him (vv. 5-6).

The lament over the distressed land is renewed in verse 7. Since the foe had broken a treaty, the envoy of peace wept bitterly (v. 7). Travel had become unsafe; therefore, the highways were deserted and in bad repair (v. 8). Even nature itself was

The occasion of the oracle may have been _____ demand for _____
 _____ after _____
 submission in _____.

(Assyria's, unconditional surrender, Hezekiah's, 701 B.C.)

Israel's God would rule on M _____ Z _____
 and prevail over i _____ and bring justice,
r _____, s _____,
d _____, w _____, and
k _____ to those who feared Him.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

pictured as mourning over the physical and spiritual destruction which had engulfed the land (v. 9).

The lament is followed by an oracle of doom on the oppressor (vv. 10-12). The Lord would arise and take action against the foe. His action is described as a fire which consumes the chaff and stubble, material used to burn lime (vv. 11-12). The victory of Yahweh would be obvious for those in distant places as well as for those in Zion (v. 13). The godless would recognize the terror of His wrath (v. 14). They would acknowledge that only the righteous can live in the midst of the consuming fire. Righteousness includes: (1) just conduct; (2) righteous speech; (3) hatred of oppression; (4) rejection of bribes; (5) closing the ear against suggestions of murder; and (6) closing the eyes against sinful sights (v. 15). The righteous man would inhabit high places; that is, he would live in the perpetual presence of God (v. 16). God's presence would give assured protection that is compared to the stronghold of rocks. God's presence also would bring adequate provision: bread and water were assured.

The ideal future King who will rule for Yahweh will be seen in His beauty (v. 17). With the coming of the Messianic Age, men will gaze in amazement on the grandeur of the land that stretches afar and on the glories of the new Jerusalem (v. 17). The people will look back upon the terror of the past and give thanks that those who collected tribute for the foreign nation and who counted the towers of Israel's defence in order to lay siege to her cities will no longer be present (v. 18). The streets of Jerusalem will no longer be filled with conquering soldiers who speak foreign languages (v. 19). The people will look with great delight upon Jerusalem where the religious festivals have been restored and the Lord has returned to dwell (vv. 20-21). The Lord who is Law-giver, Judge, and King will bring about the deliverance of His people (vv. 22-23). The inhabitants will rejoice that their sickness is healed and their iniquity forgiven (v. 24).

What six characteristics are included in righteousness?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

*The Lord who is _____,
_____, and King will bring about
_____ of His _____.*

(Law-giver, Judge, deliverance, people)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. Why has Isaiah 24-27 frequently been called the Isaiah Apocalypse? _____

2. What typical apocalyptic features are missing from Isaiah 24-27? _____

3. Give two Old Testament references to the resurrection of the dead. _____
4. How extensive is the judgement on the nations? _____

5. Interpret Isaiah 24:10. _____

6. Who will survive the judgement? _____
7. How severe will judgement be upon the earth? _____
8. Interpret Isaiah 24:21. _____

9. What is the eschatological banquet? _____
10. What was the purpose of God's punishment of the unrighteous and how did He punish them? _____

11. What new teaching does Isaiah 26:19 add to future hope? _____
12. Who is Leviathan? _____
13. How does Israel as the vineyard in Isaiah 27:2-6 differ from 5:1-7? _____
14. How did Isaiah answer the Israelite question that God treated her as severely as the pagan nations? _____

15. What did Isaiah predict would happen to Ephraim? _____
16. How did the leaders of Israel and Judah respond to Isaiah's teachings? _____
17. Why did Isaiah oppose an alliance with Egypt? _____
18. What lesson did Isaiah teach in the parable of the farmer? _____

19. Why were the people without spiritual guidance? _____
20. List five characteristics of the New Age. _____

21. List two reasons for Isaiah's opposition to alliance with Egypt. _____

22. What did Isaiah predict would happen to Judah because of her trust in alliances? _____
- _____
23. What would the people of Jerusalem be required to do before they would be restored? _____
- _____
24. Interpret Isaiah 31:4. _____
- _____
25. What changes would come to Judah under the righteous rulers? _____
- _____
26. What would bring about Judah's tribulation in Isaiah 33? _____
- _____
27. Give six characteristics of the righteous man who can survive Yahweh's wrath. _____
- _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)

Read pages 64-74 in The Book of Isaiah, by Wright, and answer the following questions.

1. What is the relation of the Messianic Banquet and the Lord's Supper?
2. What is the purpose of resurrection according to Isaiah 26:19?
3. What is the effect of righteousness on a society?
4. What is apocalyptic eschatology?

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. What doctrines concerning the end-time were developed in apocalyptic writings?
2. Contrast Isaiah's teachings in the chapters included in this lesson regarding Judah's present situation and future hope. Include the following areas:
 - Conduct of the people: moral and religious
 - Activities of Yahweh with regard to the nation
 - Leadership of the nation
 - Productivity of the land
 - The inhabitants

Seminar Discussion

1. How do the concepts of John the Baptist's message (Matt. 3) compare with the concepts of Isaiah in the chapters of this lesson? Consider:

The Day of the Lord	The Kingdom of Heaven
The righteous king	Jesus
The conduct of the people in the Day of the Lord	Preparation for the Kingdom The role of the Spirit
2. Does Isaiah's advice to Judah to avoid military alliances with Egypt mean that military defence today expresses a lack of faith?
3. How is the resurrection teaching of Isaiah 26 an advancement over hope beyond death in earlier writings?