

Review

The section of Isaiah spanning chapters 24 through 27 is commonly called by commentators "Isaiah's Apocalypse." Remember that chapter 24 began with the description:

Is. 24:1 Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants.

He went on to foretell of the terror awaiting the people who live on the earth during the time of the end - the Great Tribulation:

Is. 24:17-19 Terror and pit and snare confront you, O inhabitant of the earth. Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit, and he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare; For the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently.

The Lord will punish the rebellious angels (Isa. 24:21), as well as the people who rejected His Son Jesus Christ.

Then, Jesus will reign in Jerusalem for a thousand years. This was described in great detail in chapters 25 and 26.

Last week, we read as chapter 27 began with Isaiah's statement that the Lord was going to punish - and eventually put to death - the devil.

Tonight, we will finish our study of "Isaiah's Apocalypse," as we complete chapter 27...

27:2-6 Guarding The Vineyard

God had established a standard of interpretation back in chapter five. He spoke of a vineyard which had been lovingly cared for, but had borne no fruit. He talked about what would happen to the vineyard as a result. Then, He explained what He was talking about:

Is. 5:7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel...

Here in chapter 27, He is saying that in the day that the Lord banishes the devil to the abyss for a thousand years (Isa. 27:1), in the day

the Lord punishes the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity (Isa. 26:21), He will establish the vineyard in security. He will be guarding Israel night and day.

I Have No Wrath

Although God will come to the earth in wrath, His wrath will be emptied upon those who have rejected Christ. He will have no anger towards the people of Israel.

But anyone who tries to war against Him will be burned completely. Although we have quoted this passage a number of times lately, it bears repeating. At the end of the Millennium, the nations will follow the devil to war against God:

Rev. 20:9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

It is so obviously clear that it is much better to be at peace with the Lord than to be at war with Him. No wonder the Lord repeats Himself:

Is. 27:5 "...Let him make peace with Me, let him make peace with Me."

27:7-11 Banishing Them

Verse seven is a difficult read. It consists of two sentences, each of which contains a comparison and a question - and neither a worded in a way that makes them easy to process.

When I encounter something like this, I like to read many different Bible translations to see if any of them help to clarify. In this case, I found that "The Message" explains it very well. In this verse, Isaiah asks,

Is. 27:7 (MSG) Has GOD knocked them to the ground as he knocked down those who hit them? Oh, no. Were they killed as their killers were killed? Again, no.

Much clearer! In the past, God has completely destroyed nations who were mortal enemies of Israel. But when Israel was in sin, He did not wipe them out. He did, of course, drive them out of the land. But they were merely expelled, not exterminated.

The future holds more of the same. You see, during the Great Tribulation, they will be driven from the land into hiding as the antichrist for three and a half years will seek to destroy them. Daniel was told that the antichrist...

Dan. 9:27 "...will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate..."

This stop to the sacrifice is called "the Abomination of Desolation." It is the act when, as Paul forewarned, the antichrist...

2Th. 2:4 ...takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Jesus said,

Matt. 24:15-16 "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."

Once again, God will have allowed the Jews to be driven from their land. It will be for the same purpose as it's always been: to bring them to repentance.

Jacob's Iniquity Will Be Forgiven

In their exile, the Jews will realize that their forefathers rejected the true Messiah. They will be ashamed to realize that they had nearly been deceived into accepting the antichrist as the Messiah. This will cause them to cry out to Jesus, which will lead to their forgiveness.

Through their final exile, the price of their sin will be paid. They will receive divine pardon for their sin. Paul tells us that this has been the plan all along:

Rom. 11:25-27 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery - so that you will not be wise in your own estimation - that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has

come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

Idolaters Receive No Compassion

The idolaters, on the other hand, will not be forgiven.

You may wonder how idolatry will be present on the earth when Jesus returns. After all, when the antichrist commits the abomination of desolation, he...

2Th. 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

All current objects of idolatry will be done away with. However, a new one will be introduced. It is prophesied of the false prophet that he...

Rev. 13:14-15 ...deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

An image of the antichrist will be constructed, and people are commanded to worship it. In the next chapter of Revelation, we are told:

Rev. 14:9-11 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever

and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

When Jesus returns to the earth, every image of the antichrist, every altar constructed in his honor, will be demolished to dust. And those who have worshiped the image of the beast (Rev. 13:14-15) will have no hope of being saved. God will not have compassion on them, and they will never experience God's grace (Rev. 14:9-11)

27:12-13 Gathering The Elect One By One

Isaiah had told us about this back in chapter 11...

Is. 11:12 ...He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

This event was also spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24...

Matt. 24:30-31 “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. 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.”

One thing that also doesn't stand out about the Matthew passage until you compare it with Isaiah 27:12 is that in this event, Jesus is sending forth His angels - angels to gather the elect together ONE BY ONE. This is clearly not the rapture, which happens to all of us in the twinkling of an eye. This is a careful threshing, with God having each grain gathered individually, bringing them to Him at the holy mountain in Jerusalem.