

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #33

Isaiah 24:1-23

I want you to think for a moment about all of the things God has the capability of doing. He can cause a military force to go any place He wants. He controls economies and He can cause them to rise or fall. He controls all governments, big and small. He controls all weather and He can send rain, or drought, tornadoes or hurricanes or earthquakes any where He wants. He controls animal life, human life and plant life. He controls all diseases. Now think for a moment of a time when God would use every element at His disposal for the sole purpose of destroying everything on earth. Think for a moment of a time when for seven straight years, God's goal is to destroy all the people on this earth and everything in it. That is precisely what Isaiah saw and what he describes in **Isaiah 24**.

In **Isaiah 24**, the Hebrew word “erets,” which is translated in English “earth,” is used 16 times (**24:1, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 19, 19, 20**). This particular Hebrew word is used to refer to this earth as opposed to heaven. This is a judgment against this earth, this world, this terrain, this land, this ground (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 81). **There is no question that this text forces us to acknowledge that God intends at some point to pour out His wrath on this literal, physical earth and all of the people who live in it.**

In the previous “oracle” section, we saw a series of judgments that will take place against various nations, cities and individuals which, for the most part, will ultimately occur during the Tribulation. **The specific targets of the “oracle” judgments were targets that were either directly or indirectly connected to Israel. But when we come to this section in Isaiah, the judgment of God goes from local to global.** As John Calvin said, this is a judgment against the whole world (*Isaiah*, Vol. 7, p. 165).

C. I. Scofield called Isaiah chapters 24-27 Isaiah's “little apocalypse.” In these chapters, Isaiah describes the terrible things pertaining to the Tribulation and then the wonderful blessings to follow in the millennium. Warren Wiersbe said that in the next four chapters we have three declarations: 1) God will judge His enemies (**24**); 2) God will preserve His people (**25**); 3) God will restore His nation (**26-27**).

Just as Isaiah was permitted by God to see what He will do pertaining to Israel, so also he was permitted by God to see what He will do all over the world during the Tribulation, and then what things will be like after the Tribulation. What Isaiah saw was this:

IN THE FUTURE, GOD WILL POUR OUT A WORLDWIDE JUDGMENT AGAINST THIS EARTH THAT WILL BE SO FEROCIOUS THAT ONLY A FEW PEOPLE WILL SURVIVE.

I want you to carefully notice the end of **verse 3**, “for the LORD has spoken this word.” This judgment against the world is a guaranteed promised judgment that will come from a God who cannot lie.

What is described in this chapter is a terrible, awful display of the vengeance of God. There certainly has never been any place in history where what is described here has happened. But you have God's Word that promises this will happen, and if we are near the Rapture of the Church, then the things described here may not be too far away.

Now as we look down through these verses, there are a series of nine predicted Tribulation realities:

TRIBULATION REALITY #1 – God will destroy the earth. 24:1-3

The Hebrew words used here actually paint the picture of God turning the world upside down and draining out its contents. What is actually pictured here is scary:

God will “lay waste” the world. **24:1a, 3a** - empty it, pillage it, depopulate it (Gesenius, p. 136)

God will “devastate” the world. **24:1b** - make it empty and void (Ibid., p. 124)

God will “distort” the surface of the world. **24:1c** - twist it, bend it, overturn it (Ibid., p. 611)

God will completely “despoil” the world. **24:3a** - empty it of its contents (Ibid., p. 108)

When we read the “seal judgments” in Revelation 6, and then compare it to what Isaiah saw, it is very clear that what will happen during the Tribulation will be a Divine annihilation of almost everything and everyone. God wants us to know this will certainly happen, because at the end of **verse 3** He says, “the LORD has spoken this word.”

TRIBULATION REALITY #2 – God will scatter the people. 24:1d-2

The Hebrew word “scatter” (**v. 1**), is in the Hiphil stem, which means all people, all inhabitants of the earth are being caused by God to move into a scattered state (Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, pp. 144-145). In other words, these people are not just being scattered for a moment, they will be scattered for the whole duration of the Tribulation. It will not matter what the rank of a person is, for all people will be in the same state.

God is no respecter of persons and no where is that more plainly seen than in His ferocious worldwide judgment. No one on earth will escape it. I want you to observe from **verse 2** that there will be “priests” experiencing the wrath of God. There will be numerous religious leaders who will be the target of God's wrath during the Tribulation just like everyone else.

Social or religious status will mean nothing. There will be politicians and bankers and business men and poor people and they will all be experiencing the same wrath. The Tribulation will be the great equalizer of all people. It will hit them all and destroy them all.

TRIBULATION REALITY #3 – God will cause the world and earth to mourn. 24:4-5

In **verse 4** it is stated that this judgment is not only against the earth but the world. Some have tried to localize this to Israel's land, but this is worldwide. What happens to the earth is that it mourns, withers and fades.

The word “mourn” means that everything in the world languishes, laments and droops, as in a hanging down of the head. What I understand this to mean is that during the Tribulation there will be no crops or plants that will stand tall. All vegetation will droop (Revelation 8:7). The whole world will be in a languishing state or state of mourning (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon* pp. 5, 58).

The word “wither” which is repeated twice means that everything in the world will lose its strength; it will “fade” and wither (Ibid., p. 528).

Everything in this earth will be under the judgment of God. This poor earth has had to share its space with a bunch of sinners who have polluted it in more ways than just environmental. It is a known fact that we are physically polluting this world. We have polluted the atmosphere, the water and the land. But we also have spiritually polluted this world.

In fact, the word “pollute” means that people have done things on this earth that are impious and profane. They have defiled this earth and continue to do so (Ibid., p. 293). As **verse 5** says, they transgressed God’s laws, they have blatantly violated His statutes and they have broken His everlasting covenant. People all over the world have refused to obey God’s Word and respond to His grace, and as a result, God will demolish this world and the people in it.

TRIBULATION REALITY #4 – God will destroy the people of this world. **24:4, 6**

The exalted people of the world will fade away during the Tribulation. The lofty people of worldly prominence and eminence will be dropped like flies. They transgressed God’s laws, they violated His statutes and they broke His everlasting covenant. God will hold those who live in the world guilty of everything and He will burn them. He will so pour out His wrath on the inhabitants of the world that only a “few” are left. Jesus said if the Tribulation days were not time regulated, there would be no flesh even saved (Matthew 24:22).

TRIBULATION REALITY #5 – All possible sources of joy and happiness are gone. **24:7-13**

The luxury, the feasting and the drinking will all be gone during the Tribulation. It will be hard to even find any good wine to drink (**v. 7**). The parties and the revelry will stop (**v. 8**). The singing stops (**v. 9**). Cities are in chaos (**v. 10**). That word “chaos” is tohu, which is the same word used in Genesis 1:2, which means God has leveled cities to the point that they are without form. Houses are so destroyed people cannot even enter them (**v. 10**). There is nothing to drink, no fresh water (Revelation 8:11) and no wine (**v. 11**). All joy is gone. Everything on earth will be nothing but gloom and doom and death. According to **verse 12**, every city in the world will be affected and in the end such a small number of people will be left that you can compare it to a couple of olives left on a tree or a few grapes left on a vine after harvesttime (**v. 13**).

There will be nothing anywhere in the world that can cheer people during the Tribulation. All of the party music and revelry will stop. No more night clubs, no more bars, no more concerts, for the party spirit will be over. All joy will be turned to gloom. The Tribulation will destroy everything.

TRIBULATION REALITY #6 – Any who survive will honor and glorify God. 24:14-16a

At the end of **verse 13**, we see that a few people do survive from the “midst of the earth.” Even in the time of God’s horrific wrath aimed at this world and all people in it, there will be a small remnant who will be left.

Geographically they are said to be people “from the west” (**v. 14**), “in the east” (**v. 15**), “in the coastlands” (**v. 16**) “from the ends of the earth” (**v. 16**). It is interesting to me that the first to cry out in worship concerning the Tribulation is a group “from the west.” If you look on a world map, clearly the nation that is a western nation is the United States. It is very possible that some of the first people to realize what is happening during the Tribulation will be a remnant of people from this country. They cry out for joy because they realize exactly what has happened.

These will be righteous people who do love the Lord and who will be thrilled about the fact that God has cleansed this earth of all the evil. They will have come to faith after the Rapture. These righteous people will raise their voices and praise the “Righteous One.”

If you look carefully at what is actually understood by these people, the theology is impeccable:

- 1) They worship God for His majesty. **24:14**
- 2) They worship God for His name. **24:15a** - Jehovah, the great I AM God who sovereignly does whatever He wants. No one will quibble about God’s sovereignty at this point in time.
- 3) They worship God because He is the God of Israel. **24:15b**
- 4) They worship and sing praises to the Righteous One, Jesus Christ. **24:16**

The righteous who are left will raise their voices in joy to the Lord. They will testify of the majesty of God and glorify God and the name of the LORD. All surviving people from the east and the west and from the coastlands will praise the great and glorious God who just demolished the world in the Tribulation.

At the end of **verse 16**, Isaiah was overwhelmed by what he saw in the Tribulation. As Isaiah was seeing all of this, it moved him to total distress. He sees a full display of God’s majesty and God’s wrath. Three times he cries out. Two times he uses the word “woe” (ratsi) which means to become lean, to waste away (Ibid., p. 764), and one time he uses the word “alas” (oi) which means “miserable, lamentable” me (Ibid., p. 19). **By virtue of the fact that he repeats this three times, just like in Isaiah 6 when he repeated “holy” three times, there is a definite reference that the Triune Godhead is behind this Tribulation. All of the focus of the Trinity will be on pouring out God’s wrath on this world.** It was that which left Isaiah without any strength.

Now at the end of **verse 16**, the word “treacherous” is used four times and it is in the plural form with a plural verb - the treacherous people deal treacherously. This word describes a bunch of frauds who oppress and afflict others (Ibid., pp. 101-102). Isaiah was overwhelmed because he saw God pouring out His wrath on a world of frauds who were only looking out for themselves.

TRIBULATION REALITY #7 – Nothing will escape God’s destructive wrath. **24:17-20**

Because of the evil and the treachery, all people in the world will face God’s wrath. All inhabitants of the world will face terror and the pit of hell. The one thing people will be terrified of during the Tribulation will be God! All inhabitants will be caught in the snare of God’s wrath. God will literally shake the world for the terrible sin and transgressions that have been committed on this earth.

What is described here is that human beings are on the run like frightened animals trying to avoid the snare or hunter’s trap. But they will not succeed. God will track them down and destroy them. No matter where sinners go they will not be able to escape the wrath of God. God will be pouring out wrath from the earth and out of the sky. The earth will shake and be broken and all the people in the earth will be hit with one thing after another.

TRIBULATION REALITY #8 – God will punish angels and humans. **24:21-22**

Not only will God’s judgment affect the world and the people, but it also will affect Satan and his angelic forces. God will judge and condemn the evil angels above and the evil kings below. The Devil’s brigades in heaven and on earth will be totally destroyed.

The phrase “after many days” means that God will confine evil angels and humans to the pit until the 1000 year reign of Christ is complete and then He will raise them up to face the Great White Throne Judgment and be sentenced to the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 20).

TRIBULATION REALITY #9 – God will reign in Jerusalem after the Tribulation. **24:23b**

Jesus Christ will gloriously reign in Jerusalem, and when He does even all nature will acknowledge His presence on earth. We know that when He reigns there will be no need for the sun or the moon (Revelation 21:23). The sun will be ashamed of all the evil things that were done in the light and the moon will be abased because of all of the evil things that were done at night.

It must have been incredible for Isaiah to see the end of **verse 23**, for it tells us that when Jesus Christ reigns, His kingdom and His glory will be seen by His elders. God will share His glorious Kingdom with people like us.

What Isaiah saw that will happen in the Tribulation is something you never want to experience. You never want to experience the wrath of God, but you certainly ought to want to share in God’s glorious Kingdom. In order to do that, God’s wrath against you for sin must be appeased and there is only one place where God’s wrath is appeased - the cross of Jesus Christ. If you will believe in Jesus Christ then you will never have to worry about facing the wrath of God.