

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14V_Prophecy in the Prophets_Isaiah_Chps1-39_Part 4)

Chapters 1-39 – Part 4

In this session, we will continue our study of prophetic passages in the 1st half of the book of Isaiah (chps 1-39). In our last session, we began to examine a fairly large passage that has significant eschatological overtones (24:1-27:16). This large passage depicts God's victory over the entire earth for the sake of His elect. Chapter 24 (examined previously) describes God's judgment and overthrow of the earth. Chapter 25 is a responsive praise by those whom He has preserved. Chapters 26 and 27 for the most part describe the regathering and restoration of God's people. This entire section is couched in messianic and eschatological terminology. We noted that the structure of the passage is chiasmic and centers upon Mount Zion.

- A** The Lord's harvest from a destroyed world (24:1-13: destruction, 1-12; gleanings, 13)
- B** The song of the world remnant (24:14-16a)
- C** The sinful world overthrown (24:16b-20)
- D** The waiting world (24:21-23)
- E** The song of the ruined city (25:1-5)
- F** Mount Zion (25:6-12)
- E'** The song of the strong city (26:1-6)
- D'** The waiting people of God (26:7-21)
- C'** Spiritual forces of evil overthrown (27:1)
- B'** The song of the remnant of the people (27:2-6)
- A'** The Lord's harvest from a destroyed people (27:7-13: destruction, 7-11; gleanings, 12-13)¹

In chapter 25, we find a psalm or song of praise that will be sung by those who enter the Millennium after the judgment associated with the 2nd Advent of Christ.

Chapter 25 – A Kingdom Psalm of Praise

A hymn of praise by Isaiah (vv. 1-5) – Only a believer who is physically delivered from the judgments that will come upon the earth and the earth's population during the Tribulation could voice praise as a result of having seen the Lord's deliverance through such devastation. Isaiah praises the Lord's name (i.e. His revealed character) for His acts of judgment (vv. 2-3 – "you have made a city a ruin") and deliverance (vv. 4-5 – "you have been a strength...refuge").

God's judgment upon the world (i.e. the "city"- 24:12-13) will cause people of "terrible nations" (i.e. those who were enemies of Israel and intent upon her subjugation and her removal) to give honor to God (v. 3). There is an interesting contrast here – these "terrible nations" will be stilled while the poor and the needy will be rescued (vv. 4-5).

Principle: When God delivers, His deliverance reverses the fortunes of people. Those who depend upon God are delivered; whereas, those whose faith is in themselves are judged. This is a major theme of OT Scripture, e.g. 1 Sam 2:1-10 cf. Jas 5:1-6.

Application: The powerful of the world will be reduced to shame; whereas, the meek [humble] of the world will be exalted to inherit the earth and the kingdom (cf. Matt 5:3-12).

¹ Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah," *Expository Notes* – on compact disc, (August 2003 edition).

Application: Do you find comfort in your present crises in knowing that all injustices suffered on behalf of Him will be rectified?

Principle: The spiritually minded believer obtains great joy in understanding eschatology because it has practical benefits in phase 2 of the Christian life.

Principle: The carnally minded believer is drawn to eschatology or prophecy for the purpose of exalting self with the increased insight that is provided by such a study.

Isaiah 25:6-8 is one example of many passages in Scripture where the victory celebration that occurs in the Millennium for the Lord's victory at the 2nd Advent is compared to a feast (e.g. Matt 22:1-14; Rev 19:7-9). Isaiah depicts this feast as occurring on the "mountain" of the Lord Almighty. The "mountain" symbolizes the seat of governmental authority, thus it symbolizes Jerusalem also called Mount Zion. The Messianic Kingdom is probably compared to a feast because food and its by-products will be in superabundance in the restored earth. No one will lack and all will have plenty. Even the best of wines (v. 6) will be available for all people. This passage is not a figurative reference to God's care for believers in the present age of the Church. This is a prediction of a literal, future historic event which view is validated by comparison and the proper reconciliation of this passage with other similar passages (see previous cites).

In verses 7-8, the Lord is said to destroy the "surface of the covering cast over all people" and the "veil that is spread over all nations." He is said to "swallow up death forever" and to "wipe away tears from all faces." The following table reflects a comparison of these phrases to similar phraseology found in the book of Revelation where the context seems to associate these terms with the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Psg. In Isaiah	Phrase	Psg. In Revelation	Phrase	Explanation
Isaiah 25:7	"...the surface of the covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations"	Revelation 22:2-3	"In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him."	These phrases aren't exactly parallel, but they do reference the same fact at least in part. In the heavenly New Jerusalem that is seat of Christ's ruler during the Millennium (and which is carried forward to become part of the new heavens and new earth of eternity), the curse of death will be removed.
Isaiah 25:8	"He will swallow up death forever"	Revelation 21:4	And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.	The context in Revelation associates this event with the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God and is apparently the seat

				of Christ's rule during the Millennium.
Isaiah 25:8	"...and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces..."	Revelation 7:17	"For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."	The context in Revelation describes Tribulation martyrs in their resurrection bodies. The exact timing of this picture (i.e. while the Tribulation is underway or at the beginning of the Millennium) is not stated in the passage.

So, Isaiah is apparently using very figurative language to describe (at least in part) the status of the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem in their resurrected states. From Isaiah's perspective, the distinction between the role of the New Jerusalem during the Messianic Kingdom and during the eternal state was blurred. However, His focus was upon the inhabitants of that city, not any distinction between the role of the New Jerusalem in relation to the earthly Jerusalem during the Millennium or its role in eternity as a part of the "new heavens and new earth." The subject of the distinction between the role of the New Jerusalem during the Messianic Kingdom on earth (i.e. the Millennium) and its role relative to the "new heavens and new earth" of the eternal state after the Millennium has been discussed in brief in previous studies and will be discussed in greater detail in future sessions. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem (whether the New Jerusalem is being discussed in reference to the Millennial earth or to the eternal state with a "new heavens and new earth" context) are believers in their resurrected bodies which are no longer subject to death. The New Jerusalem is eternal in nature because it is related to heaven. Its inhabitants enjoy eternal life in the presence of Christ. Its relation to temporal things such as the earth at given points in time is not the subject of these passages. To confuse the two is to risk imposing an erroneous chronology or perspective upon events *within* the New Jerusalem, e.g. the idea that inhabitants of the New Jerusalem can only be in their eternal state after the Millennium has run its course on earth. Consider the follow quote which perhaps contains elements of this misunderstanding while at the same time acknowledging some very correct perspectives.

This [*i.e. the removal of the curse of death per Isa 25:7-8*] will occur at the end of the Millennium, after the final rebellion and God's creation of new heavens and a new earth [*this seems to impose an earthly chronology upon events within the New Jerusalem*]. Isaiah's vision of the future followed the course of events that later revelation clarified, but he did not present the eschatological future as consisting of consecutive watertight compartments for two reasons. First, he did not see the future as clearly as later prophets did (1 Pet. 1:10-12), and second, he described the future here as a poet rather than as a historian. Isaiah here telescoped the millennial and eternal reigns of God – both aspects constitute His future kingdom – as He did the first and second advents of Christ (65:17-25).²

Since I know the author of this quote, I don't believe that he believes that Tribulation martyrs, for instance, will not inhabit the New Jerusalem until after the Millennium is complete, but the opening statement in this cite perhaps might leave one with that impression. The curse of

² Ibid. For similar observations, see John A. Martin, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Walvoord, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985), 1074.

death will have been removed for anyone in their resurrection body who inhabits the New Jerusalem and that fact is not subject to events running their chronological course on earth before it becomes a reality. When believers are in their resurrection bodies, there will be no more death, no more tears, and no more sorrow. Tribulation believers will receive their resurrection bodies (along with all OT saints) at the end of the Tribulation on earth and in association with the 2nd Advent of Christ based upon my understanding of eschatological events. Otherwise, I believe the quote to be very helpful.

Isaiah 25:9-12, the last few verses of this chapter, return to the emphasis of the first few verses – the joy that will come to God’s people as they prepare to enter the Millennial kingdom. The believers of “that day” will praise the Lord and rejoice that they are finally in the presence of their God Who has delivered them and Whose long-awaited rule over the earth will have then arrived (cf. Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-12). At this time, hope gives way to sight (1 Cor 13:9-10, 12).

In these last verses of chapter 25, Moab represents godless nations which are pictured as antagonistic to Israel earlier in Isaiah’s book (see chapters 15-16). These nations are pictured as full of arrogant pride and perceived self-sufficiency. This pride has kept them from seeking the Lord for their security and this same pride becomes the basis of their downfall and humbling treatment. Moab portrays these arrogant nations and is pictured in verses 10-11 as attempting to swim by their own strength out of a sewer (i.e. the “refuse heap” – water mixed with dung). This is certainly poetic language for which Isaiah is well known. Isaiah was the master of the use of poetic imagery to depict in graphic ways the divine viewpoint (e.g. Isa 64:6).

Chapter 26 – The Future Rejoicing of God’s People

This chapter has as its focus the remnant of Israel during the Millennial Messianic Kingdom. It is a song of praise and prayer that will be sung by this remnant because of the Lord’s intervention on their behalf at the 2nd Advent. God’s victory over the world for Israel is the theme.

Jerusalem, the city from which the Lord will reign, is the strong city (v. 1), the walls of which are described figuratively to be salvation. In my opinion, this is a description of the earthly city of Jerusalem during the Millennium since only “righteous nations” which keep the truth can enter. Nations will inhabit the earth during the Millennium, but nations do not inhabit the New Jerusalem which is poised above the earth during the Millennium. Earthly Jerusalem during the Millennium is described as Mount Zion.

Certainly, the phrase “righteous nation” refers to Israel during the Millennium since only believers who endure to the end of the Tribulation that make up the remnant pass over from the Tribulation on earth into the Millennium on earth in their physical bodies. However, Gentile believers will also be delivered in “that day” into the Millennial kingdom. These Gentile believers will also be considered “righteous” and will pay homage to the Lord via Jerusalem. So, the phrase in verse 2 – “Open the gates that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in” – is a reference to more than just Israel.³

Verse 3 is one of the most wonderful promises in the Bible. The believer’s source of true peace and inner happiness is to have a mind “stayed” on the Lord. One term that we have used to express the same concept is the phrase “occupation with Christ.” That phrase embodies the concept that Isaiah describes in this passage. Other expressions of the same concept are found in other passages in the New Testament (e.g. Matt 6:24; Phil 4:7; Jas 1:6-8).

Principle: When Christ is the believer’s total focus, only then can the believer not be distracted by people tests (e.g. personalities, animosities, jealousies, approbation lust, etc.),

³ See previous references for examples of commentary that seems to limit this verse to Israel alone.

system tests (e.g. corporate or business distractions, organizational upheavals, etc.), and the suffering by association with a reversionistic society.

Interpretation: The Tribulation believer will find peace in the midst of the worst of all of these test scenarios as he focuses his attention upon the short duration until the 2nd Advent of Christ.

Application: Do you have peace in your soul or are you distracted from focus upon Christ due to any of these types of tests?

In verse 4, Isaiah encourages this type of trust in the Lord on the part of Judah rather than trusting in the nations. His language urges this type of trust as a way of life rather than a one-time event. "Yah, the Lord" is a repetition of the Lord's name in order to provide emphasis. It is the Lord Who is the source of everlasting strength and courage. Similar references to the Lord as a Rock or Refuge are found in Psalm 18:2; 19:14; 61:2; and 1 Corinthians 10:4. To not trust in the Lord is to rely upon one's own strength in arrogant pride (v. 5). The result will eventually be humiliating defeat at the hands of the Lord. The proud and arrogant of the world will be debased; whereas the humble believer who has trusted in the Lord for hope and comfort will be exalted (v. 6). Once again, there is a reversal of fortunes.

Principle: Until one learns that one cannot save himself, God cannot save him.

Principle: Until the believer learns to wait upon the Lord, he has not admitted that there is nothing he can do to deliver himself.

Principle: The believer's deliverance in time is not anthropocentric schemes to avoid pain and suffering.

Application: Have you appropriated into your spiritual experience these principles?

Principle: Wicked or unrighteous people do not benefit from grace offered to them (v. 10) because they refuse to accept it.

Principle: Wicked or unrighteous people only learn righteousness when God acts in judgment (vv. 9-10).

In verse 11, Isaiah reflects upon his generation and concludes (consistent with the previous verse) that they would not be swayed by the judgment of the Lord. They are too focused upon (full of "envy") other nations and peoples for their deliverance. In turn, God would use those opposed to Him (His "enemies") to discipline His own. In the Kingdom, believers will enjoy God's peace because they are thankful and recognize what God has done on their behalf (26:12-15). The borders of Israel will be expanded to the bounds promised to Abraham – a feat that was not even accomplished under David and Solomon.

Principle: Ungrateful and unthankful people are a most miserable and depressed lot.

Application: Would you characterize yourself as a person fully cognizant and full of gratitude for what the Lord has done on your behalf? If not, you are missing the joy in life for which the Lord intended you to benefit and be a light in a world of spiritual darkness.

During Isaiah's days, Israel went through many pains similar to a woman in labor. However, instead of giving birth to something significant like the salvation of other nations, their pain had taught them nothing (vv. 16-18). Verse 19 is probably a reference to both the individual resurrection of believers and to the restoration of the nation of Israel in "that day" (cf. Dan 12:2; Job 19:26). Verses 20-21 are a warning to that future spiritual remnant that hard times (i.e. the

Tribulation as we now know) would precede the Kingdom blessings. Before God opened the gates to the new city, they would need to shut their gates to their foes for a period of time.

Observation of note: It is important to note Isaiah's prophetic perspective as an 8th Century B.C. prophet in Judah. While Isaiah may have understood more eschatological detail than that which is contained in his book, the fact of the matter is that his book, when examined without the benefit of any subsequent revelation provided through other prophets, reveals an eschatological picture of the future that is lacking in detail. Isaiah understood that the Messiah would suffer (Isa 53), that there would be a period during which the believing remnant would need to withdraw and protect themselves from the world (Isa 26:20-21), that there would be a future resurrection of both believers and Israel as a nation of the redeemed (Isa 26:19), and that there would be a future reign of the Messiah on the earth of indefinite duration (various passages that we've studied). However, the time table for all of these events is rather blurred – both in terms of their future chronology and in terms of when the fulfillment of these events would begin. As a matter of fact, Isaiah, on many occasions, blurs the distinction between the soon-to-occur discipline of Israel and Judah by God at the hand of their enemies (per Lev 26) with eschatological events. Until one realizes that Isaiah's style includes a poetic interplay between more immediate and more distant future events and until one interprets those events using a dispensational interpretive paradigm that appreciates the nature of progressive revelation, one will not understand Isaiah's book.