

• *Israel and Judah*

We remember that Isaiah chapters 1–5 set out the basic description of the spiritual situation throughout the days of Isaiah, and chapters 6–12 went into details, telling us about Isaiah’s call^{□1} and the unbelief of both Judah and northern Israel^{□2} but the eventual gift of salvation that will come to all of God’s people^{□3}.

□1 ch. 6
□2 ch. 7–11
□3 ch. 12

Gentile world also in trouble

• *The world in chaos*

But it is not only Israel that is in desperate need. The whole gentile world is also in great trouble. In Isaiah chapters 13–27, the prophet is putting to us the need of the whole world. He presents his material in a series of three spirals. It is as if he is going round and round in a circle three times, surveying the state of the nations. First he has a ‘circle’ of five songs about nations, beginning with Babylon. Then he does the same thing again, going around a circle of songs about nations, again beginning with Babylon.

• *The conquering king*

• *The world comes to Zion*

In Isaiah chapters 24–27 he carries on in the same style, but now what he says is not so tied to particular nations. He is extending the principles he has established and applying them to the whole world.

• *Secure salvation*

• *Worldwide victory*

Isaiah 24:1–20	The world in chaos
Isaiah 24:21–23	The conquering King
Isaiah 25:1–12	The world comes to Zion
Isaiah 26:1–21	Secure salvation
Isaiah 27:1–13	Worldwide victory

• *The nations need a Saviour as much as Israel does*

The basic point of this entire section^{□1} is that the nations need a Saviour as much as Israel does. Isaiah treats the world as one giant city. ‘The city’ is a common theme in the book of Isaiah. When invaded by its enemies, Israel is ‘like a city under siege’^{□2}. Jerusalem was meant to be a city of righteousness, but it had so deteriorated it became the centre of violence, greed and insensitivity to the sufferings of the needy. ‘How the trustworthy city has become a harlot,’ said the prophet^{□3}. In Isaiah 13 Babylon is seen marching on God’s chosen city. But now in Isaiah 24–27 the whole world is a city under judgement. We have here a ‘tale of two cities’. The world is like a city, and the people of God are a city – a new Jerusalem.

□1 13:1-27:13
□2 1:8
□3 1:21

• *The world is like a city – under judgement*

• *The people of God are also a city*

• *God is so angry with sin that the entire world is to be devastated*

Isaiah chapter 24 makes one main point: **God is so angry with sin that the entire world is to be devastated**. The only hope is in the coming of God’s King^{□1}. Isaiah’s message has widened. In Isaiah chapters 1–12 he was concerned with Israel. In chapters 13–23 he has been concerned with the nations surrounding Israel. Now Isaiah has something to say about the entire planet.

□1 24:21-23

1. Throughout the planet there will be environmental and social chaos

1. **Throughout the planet there will be environmental and social chaos.** Isaiah sees a vision of God’s punishing the world for its sin in the undated future^{□1}.

□1 24:1-3

¹ See, Yahweh is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants.

• Sin damages the earth

Sin damages the very ground of the earth. It pollutes its rivers and seas. It turns its lands into deserts. It creates refugees and displaced people.

2. No one will be able to escape it

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²It will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor.

³The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. It is Yahweh who has spoken this word.

• Sin is global – every kind of person involved

Sin is global, with every kind of person involved. Religious leaders and senior business-people are involved; so are the common people – the servant, the maid, the man or woman in need of a financial loan.

• Sin is an immense environmental threat

Sin is earthy, territorial, environmental, physical in its side-effects. From the very earliest day, planet earth was tied up with the spiritual state of men and women. When they were created, it was created. When they fell, it fell, and nature became 'red in tooth and claw'. Where there is a measure of righteousness there is a measure of prosperity even for the physical realm in which men and women live. But sin is an immense environmental threat, and where sin abounds environmental chaos abounds – until grace intervenes.

3. The cause of the chaos is the breaking of some basic principles of God's world

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⁴The earth withers and fades away, the world languishes and withers, the exalted ones of the earth languish.

Even the most powerful cannot escape this global corruption. But what causes the situation? Sinful men and women!

• Even the most powerful cannot escape this corruption

⁵The earth is polluted under its people; they have transgressed the laws, altered the fixed statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.

⁶Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people are guilty. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

• 'Everlasting covenant' between people and earth

There is what we could call an 'everlasting covenant' between men and women (on the one side) and planet earth (on the other side). It is a law-covenant in which the senior partner imposes his will upon a junior partner and a junior partner has to swear obedience. If the covenant-obedience is fulfilled, the promises of the senior partner will be obtained. If the covenant-obedience is **not** fulfilled, the punishments of the senior partner will fall upon the disobedient partner. Certain basic rules (the worship of God in spirit and in truth,

• *Breaking the rules results in environmental calamity*

• *There is hope*
 • *We need to see the seriousness of the problem*

honouring God-given structures – parents, family-life, the forces of law-and-order in a land, the sanctity of truth and of life, the right of private ownership) are ‘fixed statutes’. Break them and you suffer! There are reasons for environmental calamity. ‘Therefore . . . therefore . . .’, says Isaiah¹.

1 24:6

Is there any hope? Yes, there is, and Isaiah is about to mention the way of salvation in God’s King. But there is bad news before good news. The King is coming but Isaiah wants us to see the depth and seriousness of the problem he comes to solve.

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