

The Book of the Prophet ISAIAH

Chapter 27

Theme: God's overthrow of Babylon would allow Him to replant His vineyard in Judah for fruitfulness.

Outline:

- 1 God to Slay Leviathan with His Sword
- 2-3 A Song of Blessing for God's Vineyard
- 4-6 His Fury Kept for Obstinate Enemies
- 7-9 God's Chastening to Bear Good Fruit
- 10-11 But His Chastening Must Come First
- 12-13 Then Careful Gathering of the Remnant

Preparatory Reading: Isaiah 5; Psalm 2; Psalm 126; Psalm 137.

Related Links:

- A. *Exposition of Isaiah 5* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/isaiah-5.pdf>.
- B. *Importance of Context (slides)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/two-step-bible-study-rule-2.pdf>.
- C. *Importance of Context (outline)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/slaves-to-context.pdf>.
- D. *Interpreting Bible Prophecies (slides)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/prophecy-interpretation.pdf>.
- E. *Babylon – History and Prophecies (slides)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/babylon.pdf>.

Introduction:

- A. Chapters 13-23 foretold various national judgments by Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and others.
- B. We choose to understand the four chapters (24-27) as tied together in one overarching prophetic vision.
 - 1. Chapter 23 is entirely about Tyre, though it does end with Tyre's resources coming to Mount Zion.
 - 2. Chapter 28 begins with and names Ephraim (the ten tribes of Israel), which indicates a new vision.
 - 3. The four chapters move from judgment (24) to deliverance (25) to praise (26) to fruitfulness (27).
 - 4. Each chapter has references to praise in Zion for the God of Zion, which identifies Judah as object.
 - 5. It hardly matters if one long vision or not, for the real value of this chapter is the obvious lessons.
- C. We understand these chapters as God's judgment on Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and then deliverance.
 - 1. The inhabitants would be scattered abroad from the territory being considered, which fits (Is 24:1).
 - 2. The inhabitants of the territory had a priest recognized by Isaiah, which fits Judah, not all (Is 24:2).
 - 3. The inhabitants include special mention of usury, which was a prohibition of Moses' law (Is 24:2).
 - 4. The land being considered would be emptied of inhabitants and also spoiled, which fits (Is 24:3).
 - 5. The people of the land, ordinarily haughty, would mourn and languish, like Lamentations (Is 24:4).
 - 6. The inhabitants were guilty of breaking laws, the ordinance, and the everlasting covenant (Is 24:5).
 - 7. This cannot be justly said of any other nation or any other event, for they always sinned (Is 24:5).
 - 8. The earth desolate of inhabitants was due to a curse, which is Judah by Moses, not others (Is 24:6).
 - 9. The terrible curse God had told Israel was to rip them out of their land, as Babylon did (Is 24:6).
 - 10. The city broken down excludes Shalmaneser and Sennacherib, thus Nebuchadnezzar (Is 24:10).
 - 11. The judgment would cause a small, scattered remnant to praise God, only Jews fit (Is 24:6,13-16).
 - 12. If the isles of the sea were a place a refuge, then the judgment was limited in scope (Is 24:14-16).
 - 13. Pagans were always treacherous; Nebuchadnezzar was fair; this treachery is Jeremiah (Is 24:16).
 - 14. God chasing the criminals from one trouble to another is His promised chastening (Is 24:17-18).
 - 15. The extreme, complete, and universal terms must be severely limited or never fulfilled (Is 24:19).

16. The high ones that are on high have to be Jerusalem's priests; pagan priests do not fit (Is 24:21).
 17. The chapter starts to close with ecclesiastical and civil rulers shut up in prison – Babylon (Is 24:22).
 18. The chapter concludes with a restoration of former blessings by a visit from the LORD (Is 24:22).
 19. The restoration of the people by the visit of God would be His ancients in His Jerusalem (Is 24:23).
 20. The wonderful positive events that follow for praise are all fulfilled in Babylon's fall (Is 25:1-5).
 21. The wonderful promises of prosperity after recovery including Messiah are for Judah (Is 25:6-9).
 22. The following, related shout of praise to God is specifically declared to be by Judah (Is 26:1-4).
 23. The following description of deliverance from their chastening fits those of Judah (Is 26:12-16).
 24. The promise is that the vineyard of God and those of Jacob will take root and blossom (Is 27:2-6).
 25. The judgment of Jacob was only chastening, unlike God's judgment of their enemies (Is 27:7-9).
 26. The culmination of the prophecy is gathering dispersed, outcast Jews to Jerusalem (Is 27:12-13).
 27. Similitudes, of which there are many, are a language tool of the prophets (Hosea 12:10; Rev 1:1).
 28. With this contextual emphasis on Judah and Jerusalem, we must limit universal terms accordingly.
 29. A study of Jeremiah, especially chapters 30-45, will give actual history to fulfill these prophecies.
 30. Study of Kings and Chronicles related to the final days of Judah and then its recovery also fit well.
- D. We are not moved by those who choose an interpretation by the universal terms *earth*, *land*, or *world*.
1. The use of *earth*, *land*, and *world* are easy terms for the country, nation, people, and cities of Judah.
 2. A child should know that these words cannot mean the whole globe, so we look for another sense.
 3. If you force a literal or common meaning on these words for all the earth, it must include Alaska.
 4. If you force a literal or common meaning on these words for all the earth, it must be Christ's return.
 5. But since Isaiah 13 has already used these terms for merely localized Babylon, we also limit them.
 6. By reading in order and learning, the use of terms in this chapter have already been limited for us.
 7. Isaiah 13 is taking of Babylon by the Medes, yet *earth* and also *heavens* are used (Is 13:13,10,5).
 8. Isaiah 13 is taking of Babylon by Medes, yet God said He would destroy the *whole land* (Is 13:5,9).
 9. Isaiah 13 is taking of Babylon by the Medes, yet God said He would punish the *world* (Is 13:11).
 10. How extensive was all the world taxed (Luke 2:1)? Or Jesus believed and taught (Jn 12:19; 18:20)?
 11. We ourselves use such expressions – the *whole world* is nuts ... the *earth* has gone crazy ... the weight of the *world* is on his shoulders ... the *earth* is waiting with bated breath, etc.
 12. The thoroughness and severity of *earth* or *world* is fitting to emphasize the widespread desolation.
 13. The universal terms also fit our Lord's limited concern for only His nation in the world (Am 3:2).
 14. As context determines the limited sense of these words elsewhere in the Bible, the many examples of which are beyond the scope of these notes, so we let context set their limited sense here.
- E. Therefore, with this assumption and premise before us, we will interpret the next verses accordingly.
1. Once context is identified, verses and their words are forced to fit; meaning of words is by context.
 2. Words by sound or sense from a dictionary are distracting, especially by the prophets in the Bible.
 3. If we do not make this assumption, the verses become too general without a framework for sense.
 4. However, even if we are slightly wrong, Judah is definitely involved and the lessons are the same.

***** *God to Slay Leviathan with His Sword – Verse 1* *****

1 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

- A. We have determined the context for these four chapters (24-27) to be about Babylon.
1. See the introduction above for the various strong reasons why we made this choice.

2. Therefore, the day, era, or event stated here is chastening and restoration of Judah.
 3. Therefore, leviathan here, a sea-monster described by Job, represents the Chaldeans.
 4. This is not complicated. The verse is plain enough. The context makes it very plain.
- B. Here is a prophetic similitude by comparing something political to the animal kingdom.
1. **Leviathan.** The name of some aquatic animal (real or imaginary) of enormous size, frequently mentioned in Hebrew poetry [OED].
 2. Since the prophets used similitudes (Hos 12:10), we must encounter verses like this.
 3. It is a shame some think that leviathan is the devil, merely for the use of the word serpent, when the context here is Judah and Babylon around the fifth century B.C.
 4. Time wasted on identifying this creature, which is likely now extinct, is distracting.
 5. The key is to accept the simile as a great and terrible enemy Judah could not defeat.
 6. If the *dragon* bothers you, read scripture about Babylon (Jer 51:34; Ezek 29:3; 32:2).
 7. If the *sea* bothers you, then compare scripture about Babylon (Is 21:1; Jer 51:12-13).
 8. God described leviathan (227-240) ... <https://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/boasting-about-god-job.pdf>.
- C. God had planned and now prophesied that He would arise to destroy Judah's enemy.
1. The enemy is pagan Babylon of the Chaldeans and its successive kings to Belshazzar.
 2. God has several symbolic or figurative swords (Deut 32:41-42; Ps 45:3; Rev 2:16).
 3. Nebuchadnezzar was His sword (Is 34:5-6; Jer 47:6-7; Ezek 30:24-25; Zeph 2:12).
 4. But Babylon is now to be slain, so it must be Cyrus (Is 13:5; 41:2; 45:1-7; Jer 51:20).
 5. What a glorious verse when seen as a similitude of Cyrus/Darius destroying Babylon.
- D. Reader! What dragons or monsters has God slain for you? He will more, if you repent.

***** *A Song of Blessing for His Vineyard – Verses 2-3* *****

2 In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

- A. When God sent Cyrus to end the 70-years captivity, it was time to sing to His vineyard.
1. God's vineyard of Judah was destroyed for wild grapes, but now restored (Is 5:1-7).
 2. So we sing songs like, *The Bride of Christ*, with spiritual descriptions of the church.
- B. The words are few, but the context implies and assumes great affection and prosperity.
1. This simple statement of a song, *A vineyard of red wine*, is like the title of a painting.
 2. The next verse describes His most intimate and tender care and protection of vines.
 3. Then follows His warning He will destroy any enemies afflicting His vines (Is 27:4).
 4. Then follows grand statements of production and prosperity to fill the earth (Is 27:6).
 5. Once you get the context, the beauty, colors, and image of the painting are fully seen.
- C. Wine in the Bible ignores any White Zinfandel, Riesling, and all white or blush wines.

3 I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

- A. These words are some of the most precious in scripture – very personal, intimate, tender.

1. This is the infinite LORD JEHOVAH of the previous chapter caring for His church.
 2. Celebrate – (1) God is keeper; (2) constant supply of nutrition; (3) constant safety.
 3. His involvement in the vineyard is so great that He claims He is the only vinedresser.
 4. He had done everything for His vineyard before (Is 5:1-7), and now He did it again.
- B. Christians should know God has promised similarly, but spiritually, for the N.T. church.
1. The keeper of the N.T. vineyard – kingdom or church – is Jesus the Son of God.
 2. The N.T. vineyard is watered every moment by the permanent presence of the Spirit.
 3. He will never leave us nor forsake us, so we need not fear any, ever (Heb 13:5-6).

***** *His Fury Kept for Obstinate Enemies – Verses 4-6* *****

4 Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.

- A. God had no more fury toward His vineyard, for He had chastened, forgiven, and refined.
1. He had indeed in great fury destroyed the vineyard before by its enemies (Is 5:1-7).
 2. But now His thoughts toward Judah were kind and tender to plant them once again.
 3. God must chasten at times, but His affection is strong (Jer 31:18-20; Heb 12:5-8).
 4. Though it is Judah as a vineyard, Jesus Christ has taken away God’s fury toward us.
- B. Any attempt by enemies to spoil His vineyard with briers and thorns would be defeated.
1. God described a competitor or threat setting briers and thorns against His vineyard.
 2. He now would use battles to protect His vineyard rather than to destroy it as before.
 3. No efforts to thwart His intentions to replant the Jews in Judah could be hindered.
 4. Compare the record in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther of just such careful protection.
 5. He had terrible punishment for Haman’s family and all the Jews’ enemies in Persia.

5 Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.

- A. If any other kings or nations had sense, they would not resist but rather join with Judah.
1. The singular male pronoun *him* is to be connected back to the singular *who* (Is 27:4).
 2. Consider how Darius, Cyrus, Ahasuerus, and Artaxerxes made peace and joined.
 3. The inspired history records many became Jews in the Persian Empire (Esther 8:17).
- B. This is the warning and offer made in Psalm 2 to be wise and instructed (Ps 2:10-12).
1. The Bible tells of kings making peace e.g. nursing fathers, Herod Agrippa II, etc.
 2. History tells of kings making peace e.g. Alexander, Constantine, King James, etc.
 3. He hated queens like Bloody Mary (42/5), but loved queens like Elizabeth (70/45).

6 He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

- A. God by prophecy guaranteed that the vineyard of Israel would be planted again in Judah.
- B. Not only would they be regathered and restored (Is 27:12-13), but they would prosper.
- C. There are often spiritual fulfillments that can be pursued, like this worldwide vineyard.

***** God's Chastening to Bear Good Fruit – Verses 7-9 *****

7 Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?

- A. Enjoy this creative verse with various pronouns and three antecedents to be connected.
- B. God's treatment of Israel and Judah, though very severe, was very unlike other nations.
 - 1. These creative questions were designed to distinguish chastening from destruction.
 - 2. God smote Judah to chasten him only, but He smote Babylon to destroy him forever.
 - 3. Judah was truly slain literally and figuratively, but not like God slew the Chaldeans.
- C. Chastening is love / salvation, not hatred / damnation (Heb 12:5-13; I Cor 11:30-32).
- D. The vineyard of Israel, the O.T. church, would be planted, but Babylon would disappear.

8 In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.

- A. If or when vines in God's vineyards are unruly, He will gently correct or prune them.
 - 1. By careful measure, or restraint, according to His lovingkindness, God would prune.
 - 2. Chastening is the context, and God is very careful doing it (Jer 30:11 and Jer 10:24).
 - 3. This pruning of vines is absolutely necessary for maximum quality and quantity.
 - 4. For God to debate with men is to contend with them for their perfection (Is 57:16).
 - 5. The context before and after is consistent with this sense; commentators are lost.
 - 6. Jesus taught His apostles that He would prune them for more fruit (John 15:1-8).
- B. God's providential care and gentle chastening would be more gracious than painful.
 - 1. The east wind in that area was violent and harmful (Gen 41:6; Jer 18:17; Job 27:21).
 - 2. But God promised to lessen and soften the effect of any chastening or providence.
- C. Reader! Do you know and appreciate He has not dealt with you according to your sins?

9 By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.

- A. By gentle and wise chastening, God purged away the sins of Jacob – mainly idolatry.

1. The destruction of Jerusalem was horrific, but it had different goals than Babylon's.
 2. The lessons taught and learned in Babylon would bear the fruit or effect of godliness.
 3. The Jews repented thoroughly, as indicated by Daniels prayer for them (Da 9:1-19).
- B. When Judah returned from Babylon all the way to 70 A.D., they fully despised idolatry.
1. They violently crushed the stones of idolatrous altars as breaking apart limestone.
 2. They did not raise up the former groves where they had worshipped other gods.
 3. Though John and Jesus met with much opposition, there was no idolatry in Judah.

***** *But His Chastening Must Come First – Verses 10-11* *****

10 Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.

- A. We trust every word of God, and here is a disjunctive opening this section about Judah.
1. The *yet* opening this verse indicates something contrary – against the preceding joy.
 2. This chapter describes events 200 years in the future – return from Babylon to Judah.
 3. But something else had to happen in the interim – Judah had to be punished for sins.
 4. If the flow was not broken, then it would be a coordinating conjunction for Babylon.
 5. But since it is a disjunctive, we know that Judah's chastening is being described.
 6. This is like the epilogue closing out the song in the previous chapter (Is 26:20-21).
- B. Jerusalem and Judah, seriously defenced, were made desolate and inhabitants ran away.
1. The description is perfectly consistent with everything thus far about her desolation.
 2. The city and the land were left like a wilderness where animals could forage at will.
 3. A subtle transition is here from city to vineyard, which is clearer in the next verse.

11 When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.

- A. The vineyard here is Judah, receiving its judgment, as He had promised (Isaiah 5:1-7).
1. This description is totally opposite the blessed vineyard after Babylon (Is 27:2-9).
 2. The grapevines would wither and be broken off; menial help would burn them up.
- B. The Jews were of no understanding in spite of all the verbal and written instruction.
1. God had made them as His own peculiar people, but He would withdraw His mercy.
 2. God had formed Israel as His own nation, but He would withdraw His loving favor.
 3. This does not fit Babylon, for He had not shown them mercy of favor like to Israel.
 4. This does not fit Babylon, for then making and forming them would have little sense.

C. The withdrawing of mercy and favor was temporary, for the song here is about mercy!

***** *Then Careful Gathering of the Remnant – Verses 12-13* *****

12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.

- A. After a reminder of the chastening needed and promised, a further promise of recovery.
- B. To *beat off* is an agriculture process to separate grain from its stalk for profitable use.
 - 1. Isaiah's next chapter will explain that grains are treated differently (Is 28:23-29).
 - 2. The remnant Jews would be separated from their pagan neighbors to move home.
- C. The unnamed river and the stream of Egypt should be known – Euphrates and the Nile.
 - 1. This is a vast territory, the original boundaries of Israel, where scattered Jews lived.
 - 2. Note carefully, to distinguish this verse from the next, land between the boundaries.
- D. God would gather His remnant children very carefully, one by one, back to their land.
 - 1. As the tender care expressed earlier in this song, so it is here in *one by one* (Is 26:3).
 - 2. The dispersed Jews as children would be carefully gathered like chicks (Matt 23:37).

13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

- A. The similarities with the previous verse are great, so we look carefully for differences.
- B. These Jews to be gathered to the holy mount in Jerusalem were not between boundaries.
 - 1. The previous verse drew the boundaries and gathered the precious grain in between.
 - 2. But here are two nations mentioned outside those boundaries where other Jews lived.
- C. God would blow His trumpet, an instrument then to announce, to gather dispersed Jews.
 - 1. Jews under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah would assemble in Zion to rebuild it.
 - 2. Of course, by hints and implications earlier, this includes the gospel (Is 11:10-16).