
“LET THE METAPHORS
SPEAK TO YOU”

An LDS Commentary on Isaiah

ANN N. MADSEN

Dedicated to those who live in the time about which Isaiah prophesied

Isaiah 24

In this chapter, rather than detailing the unrighteousness of one nation at a time, as we have seen in earlier chapters, there is now a summary of the whole earth's unrighteousness." See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth...and scatter its inhabitants—no one will be spared."

24:3. The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. Notice "completely" and "totally." This may sound like Old Testament hyperbole, but the chapter then begins to describe the devastation in detail.

24:5–6. We learn how the devastation is to come about: "The earth is defiled by its people" who have broken the everlasting covenant (verse 5). "Therefore, a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt" (verse 6). The earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

24:7–10. These verses describe the new wine drying up, the merry-makers groaning, the gaiety of tambourines is stilled, the joyful harp is silent, and the noise of the revelers has stopped. "The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred" (verse 10). "In the streets they cry out for wine. All joy turns to gloom. All gaiety is banished from the earth."

24:13–16. There is an obvious break in the narrative after verse 13. Between verses 14–16, there is a description of "shouting for joy," acclaiming the LORD's majesty, exalting the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, and giving glory to the righteous one (compare Isaiah 6 where the seraphim call out, "Holy, holy, holy"). This short rejoicing is a joyful island in the middle of a sea of miseries.

24:16. Who is the “I” spoken of at the end of verse 16? But *I* waste away, *I* waste away! Who is speaking? Is it Isaiah? Is it the earth itself?

Are the “treacherous dealers” nations? Leaders of nations? Drug cartels? Dictators?

24:18. Note in verse 18 as the people of the earth try to escape from the evil surrounding them, there is no way out—“whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit, will be caught in the snare.” The way is forever blocked. Then there is a flood (perhaps a reference to Noah’s time) followed by various destructive tsunamis in our own time. An earthquake is described in verses 19–20 as the earth is broken up, split, and thoroughly shaken, eventually reeling “like a drunkard” and swaying “like a hut in the wind.” *So heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls, never to rise again.* It sounds as if the earth’s sins weigh it down.

24:22. The kings are shut up in a prison to be punished. Many scriptures describe a holding prison for the wicked until the time of the Final Judgment.

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