THE CHARACTER OF JUDGMENT

 **DATE: 1/31/2018 Wed.**

**TEXT: Isaiah 24**

**INTRODUCTION**

**T**he 24th chapter of Isaiah is part of an apocalyptic portion of Isaiah that covers chapters 24-27

God gives us a glimpse into the conditions the world will encounter during the Tribulation period in this passage

It will be a time of intense suffering on earth

The Lord will turn the planet into a vast wasteland

No one will be exempt from the catastrophes that will take place

The world will face Judgment for its sin and defiance toward God and His Word

To the Jew First and also to the Gentile

The planet will shake violently and reel back and forth like a drunkard

It will be a time no one would look forward to

Before we get into the vs. of this chapter, I’d like to take a look at the concept of Judgment itself

**~~~Prayer~~~**

**I. THE “CHARACTER” OF JUDGMENT**

What exactly is the Judgment of God?

**A. Judgment in the OT**

The Hebrew word for Judgment is an important Old Testament concept and one closely linked with God

It denotes the process whereby a verdict is reached or is the verdict itself

Judgment is bound up with the ideas of Justice and Righteousness and it is of fundamental importance that we understand it Biblically

**Genesis 18:25 – *“That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”***

The idea here is that God engages in Judgment

It’s a part of Who He is

Judgment is essentially something only God can carry out correctly

Why? Because God is Just

**Romans 3:26 –** ***“To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, …***

 ***… and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”***

Nobody taught God to be Just

**Isaiah 40:14 *– “With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of Judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way of understanding?”***

**Deuteronomy 32:4 *– “He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are Judgment: a God of Truth and without iniquity, just and right is He”***

Judgment is linked with His righteousness and is the foundation of His throne

**Psalm 97:2 –** ***“Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne”***

Judgment is as natural to God as was His act of Creation

**Jeremiah 8:7 –** ***“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the Judgment of the LORD”***

The gods of the heathen were capricious and unpredictable;

Those that worship them never know what they will do next, nor whether what they do will be pleasing to their deities or not

The Hebrews knew that God is righteous and that he demands righteousness of his people

***“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”***

God's Judgments are seen in 2 senses …

Present and Future

**Psalm 96:13 –** ***“Before the LORD: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth”***

This tells us something important about God

All people, and not only Israel, will answer to Him

And it tells us something important about the way people live

Somewhere among their many gods the polytheist would come across a deity who was not too demanding and he could live his life accordingly

But the godly Hebrew knew that in the end every human work would be judged by an all-holy and all-powerful God

There would be no escape

**Hebrews 9:27 –** ***“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”***

And while he had opportunity it was important that the Hebrew should right any wrongs, overthrow the oppressor, and deliver the oppressed

**B. Judgment in the NT**

In the New Testament the Old Testament Truth about Judgment, being both Present and in the Future, is continued

But there is a striking new thought, namely, that Judgment is now connected with the sacrifice of Christ

As He drew near to His death, Jesus said this in …

**John 12:31** - ***“Now is the Judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”***

And in the upper room as He spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit, He said that the Spirit would convict the world of Judgment –

**John 16:11 *– “Of Judgment, because the prince of this world is Judged”***

The use of Judgment in connection with the defeat of Satan is important, for it shows that this was no arbitrary happening

Nor does it mean simply that God is stronger than Satan

That’s true, but the manner in which Satan will be defeated is by righteousness

**1.** The Present Judgment

God's present Judgment of people is forcefully brought out in **Romans 1** …

- **v. 24 –** ***“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:”***

- **v.** **26 *– “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:”***

**- v. 28 *– “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;”***

Reprobate - Abandoned to error, or apostasy

Basically God allows people their own way

An interesting aspect of present Judgment is brought out in the words of Jesus

**John 3:19 *– “And this is the condemnation, (verdict) that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”***

The love of darkness is itself a Judgment

Paul teaches Present Judgment in his dealings with the Corinthian church

**I Corinthians 11:29-32 *– “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body” “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world”***

**2.** A Final Judgment

That there will be a Final Judgment is regarded as self-evident

**Romans 3:5, 6 –** ***“But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)” “God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?”***

Eternal Judgment is one of the elementary teachings about Christ

**Hebrews 6:1, 2 –** ***“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,” “Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment”***

And everyone will face it

**Hebrews 12:23 *– “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,”***

Judgment is as inescapable as death

Again **Hebrews 9:27 *– “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”***

Judgment will begin with believers

**I Peter 4:17 *– “For the time is come that Judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”***

People feel somehow that their worst failings will be hid from God

**Romans 2:16 *– “In the day when God shall Judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel”***

All disobedience will be reckoned with at the Judgment

For on that day Jesus said …

**Matthew 12:36 *– “… That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”***

Our Judgment will be on the basis of works

**Matthew 16:27 *– “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works”***

Paul makes it clear that salvation is on the basis of Christ's Finished work and that alone,

But what we build on that foundation will be tested ***“with fire”***

**I Corinthians 3:10-15 – *“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” “Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;” “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is” “If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward” “If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”***

Believers will be saved by Christ, but our work will be judged on Judgment Day

For the saved it is the Bema Seat of Christ

For the Lost is the Great White Throne Judgment

**THE “CHARACTER” OF JUDGMENT**

**II. THE “CAUSES” OF JUDGMENT – vs. 1-16**

As we begin this chapter we see a scene of noisy confusion and activity

**A. The ‘Scope’ of the Judgment – vs. 1-3 …**

How large will this Judgment be?

**1.** Universal

**v. 1 - *“Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof”***

Divine retribution is recorded as coming upon both Israel and the world at large

The first section focuses chiefly on Israel although the world at large seems to be involved at times

This is because Israel is part of the world and so experiences the Judgment upon the world as well

After predicting God’s coming judgment on the Nations in the previous chapters (13-23)

The Lord now pronounces the final Judgment on the whole world

The fact that Judgment is coming on the entire world is clear

Isaiah used the word ***“earth”*** 15 times in this chapter

Christ Himself referred to this coming period of human history as the ***“Great Tribulation”*** in …

**Matthew 24:21 - *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”***

It will be a period of horrifying Judgment upon mankind

In the days of this Great Tribulation, the earth will not be literally ***“empty”***

But Isaiah's poetic description applies, because the earth will *seem* empty in many places

More than 1/3 of humanity will die in the judgments of the Tribulation (2.5 Billion People)

**Revelation 9:15-21 …**

Making the areas hardest hit seem as if *“****the earth”***were *“****empty****”*

**2.** The Individual

**v. 2 – *“And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him”***

In these comparisons, Isaiah shows that a person’s station in life will not exempt them

Those who the world considers to be in High standing

*“****priest … master … mistress … seller”***

As well, as those in a low standing of life

***“borrower … debtor”***

When the Judgment of the Great Tribulation comes, it will be complete in its scope!

Some believe that the church will be left on the earth to endure the Great Tribulation

They believe that God will miraculously protect Christians during that time,

So that they will face none of the Judgments of the LORD, only perhaps persecution from the Antichrist

But this passage reinforces the idea that the Judgments of the LORD during the Great Tribulation will be Universal & Individual in their scope, and that no class of people will be immune from the Judgments of the LORD

Therefore, it makes sense that God would remove His redeemed before this Great period of Judgment,

Although those who trust in Him during the Great Tribulation will suffer under these Judgments

**B. The ‘Reason’ for Judgment – vs. 4-6**

**1. v. 4 a –***“****The earth mourneth and fadeth away,”***

Why does the earth mourn?

Because in the Great Tribulation, the earth will be terribly afflicted by the Judgments of the LORD

**Revelation 8:7-13** describes the terrible effect these Judgments will have upon the earth

- Is this God's fault?

Does God hate the earth?

No, this is the fault of man

**2. v. 5 a – *“The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof;”***

Man has defiled the earth with his sin and great wickedness

Therefore the earth must endure the righteous Judgment of God also

In this sense, the most ecologically responsible thing anyone could do is to honor God, walk in obedience to Him!

This passage is a good reminder of the principle that God is greater than His creation

The Bible never teaches the New Age idea that God is somehow bound up together with what He has created

God is separate from His creation, and when the earth is gone God will still be around

**3.** **v. 5 b – *“because they have transgressed the laws,***

To ***“transgress”***is to step over the line that God has established

God has set boundaries, but most don't respect God's boundaries

Transgression is the spirit of our age

Let me mention some of the the slogans from recent national advertising campaigns:

Nothing is taboo … Break all the rules … To know no boundaries … Relax: No rules here … Peel off inhibitions… Find your own road … Just Do it … Do what feels good … That's what makes us human … Living without boundaries … etc.

You get the idea, you don't have to respect God's boundaries, because you can make your own rules and live by them

**4.** **v. 5 c –** ***“Because they have … changed the ordinance…”***

The Hebrew word for *“****ordinance”*** means *the Law of God* and *the Word of God*

Mankind is ripe for judgment because we have *“****changed”*** God's Word into something lighter, into something more acceptable

- Mankind has changed the *Law of God* in the sense of changing the basic moral code which men have recognized and lived by for centuries

When once it was universally recognized that it was wrong to lie, wrong to cheat, wrong to be immoral,

wrong to do so many other things, today all of that is approved and celebrated!

We have ***“changed the ordinance”****,*

And will reap the Consequences!

- Mankind has changed the *Word of God* by replacing it with substitutes, or by fashioning it into something more suitable to his liking

Every time a preacher soft-peddles the gospel, every time a politician twists the Scriptures to rise in the opinion polls, every time a counselor wrenches the context of God's Word to make it fit a crazy psychological theory,

They have *“****changed the ordinance”***, and are ripe for Judgment!

**5.** **v. 5 d – *“Because they have … broken the everlasting covenant”***

God has entered into covenant with man, and man has turned his back on His covenant

Covenant - *a solemn agreement that is binding on all parties*

Instead of abiding by God's *“****everlasting covenant****”*

Man wants to make up his own way with God!

- There is no single covenant known as the ***“everlasting covenant” …***

But it is applied to several different ones

- After the Flood

The covenant God made with mankind after the flood, never to judge the world again by water is called an *everlasting covenant*

**Genesis 9:16 *– “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth”***

- The Covenant made with Abraham

**Genesis 17:7, 13, 19 – *“And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” “He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him”***

- The covenant God made with Israel and the priesthood is called an *everlasting covenant*

**Leviticus 24:8 –** ***“Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant”***

- The covenant God made with David, to bring the Messiah from his line, is called an *everlasting covenant*

**II Samuel 23:5 *– “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow”***

- The New Covenant is called an *everlasting covenant*,

Both prophetically

**Jeremiah 32:40 *– “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me”***

And after its establishment

**Hebrews 13:20 *– “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant”***

People are by nature Covenant Breakers

**Romans 1:31 *– “Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:”***

**6.** **v. 6 a –** *“****Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth,”***

Man's hardened, repeated rejection of God will bring the ultimate Judgment: the Great Tribulation

**Matthew 24:21 *– “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be”***

- Man has Transgressed the Law, Violated the Statutes, and Broken the Covenant

**Romans 1:18-32**

This is the reason for all disease, all insanity, all the things of waste, of disorder, of strife, of misery in human history and human experience

A polluted race pollutes the earth, and chaos is the result

**C. The ‘Scene’ of Judgment – vs. 7-13**

**1.** ***“All the merry-hearted sigh”***

When the LORD brings the Judgment of the Great Tribulation, there will be no more partying as usual

The days of **Matthew 24:38 – “*eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”*** are gone

***“the noise of the jubilant ends, the joy of the harp ceases”***

**2.** During the Great Tribulation, God's Judgment will bring destruction everywhere

***“In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction”***

The Judgment will be so complete that the cities will look like olive trees bare

***“like the shaking of an olive tree”***

And grape vines striped of everything

*“****like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done****”*

Nothing Left!

**D. The Glory of God and the Woe of man – vs. 14-16 …**

**1.** **v. 14 – *“They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing”***

Even in the midst of great Judgment, God has His own that praise Him

Before the Great Tribulation, God will remove all His people;

But many come to trust in Jesus during the Great Tribulation, and these will praise Him in the midst of judgment

**Revelation 7:9-14 … (v. 14)**

**2.** Why do they praise Him?

Because even in Judgment, or perhaps especially in Judgment, the LORD shows His ***“majesty”,*** He shows His ***“glory”***

The godly can see the Goodness, the Greatness, and the Glory of God even in Judgment,

Even when ***“the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously”***

**THE “CHARACTER” OF JUDGMENT**

**THE “CAUSE” OF JUDGMENT**

**III. THE “COMPLETION” OF JUDGMENT – vs. 17-23**

In these final verses of the chapter we see the Completion of Judgment

**A. The Finished Judgment – vs. 17, 18**

**1.** *“****O inhabitant of the earth”***

The Book of Revelation, uses the phrase ***“those who dwell on the earth”*5 x’s**

**Revelation 3:10, 6:10, 11:10, 13:12, 13:14**

This is in contrast to **“*those who dwell in heaven”***

**Revelation 13:6 -**

***“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven”***

Those that dwell in Heaven are whose who are seated with Jesus in the heavenly places

**Ephesians 2:6 *– “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”***

Where do you sit? Where do you live?

Are you an *“****inhabitant of the earth”***

Or do you sit with Jesus in heavenly places?

**2.** *“****Fear … pit … snare”***

Simply put, the Judgment of the LORD is inescapable

If someone escapes the fear, they will fall into the pit

If they escape the pit, they will fall into the snare

God's Judgment has enough back-up plans to catch everyone

The only way to escape the Judgment of God is to *satisfy* it,

And the only place God's Judgment was ever *satisfied* was on the cross

**B. The Intensity of God’s Judgment – vs. 19, 20 …**

The Bible describes some of this Judgment during the Great Tribulation

**Revelation 6:13, 14 *– “And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind” “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places”***

It specifically mentions a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth

**Revelation 16:18 *– “And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great”***

No wonder Isaiah says the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard!

**C. The Judgment of God will touch everyone – vs. 21-23**

**1.** *“****the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high,”***

One of the more frustrating aspects of life is to see the rich, powerful & wicked escape the present consequences of their sin

But in God’s Judgment, no one will be able to buy a high-priced lawyer, or bribe a politician to come out without being hurt

When Isaiah speaks of the ***“exalted ones”***

He is speaking of the hosts of heaven

This refers to the fallen angels that will be Judged at the same time as the those on earth

**Revelation 20:1-10**

**2.** Under God's great and final judgment, someone's status on earth or in heaven will buy them nothing

Poetically speaking, even the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed

No degree of earthly greatness will help man on that day,

And no degree of heavenly greatness will help an angelic being on that day!

**3.** Instead – *“****the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously”***

At the end of the Great Tribulation, God will usher in a thousand years of His glorious *“****reign”*** over all the earth from *“****Mount Zion and in Jerusalem****”*

God's purpose in Judgment isn't simple vengeance or vindictiveness,

It is to bring about a glorious new world in Righteousness and Holiness

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