

Rel A 304 Reading Questions for Thursday, October 12

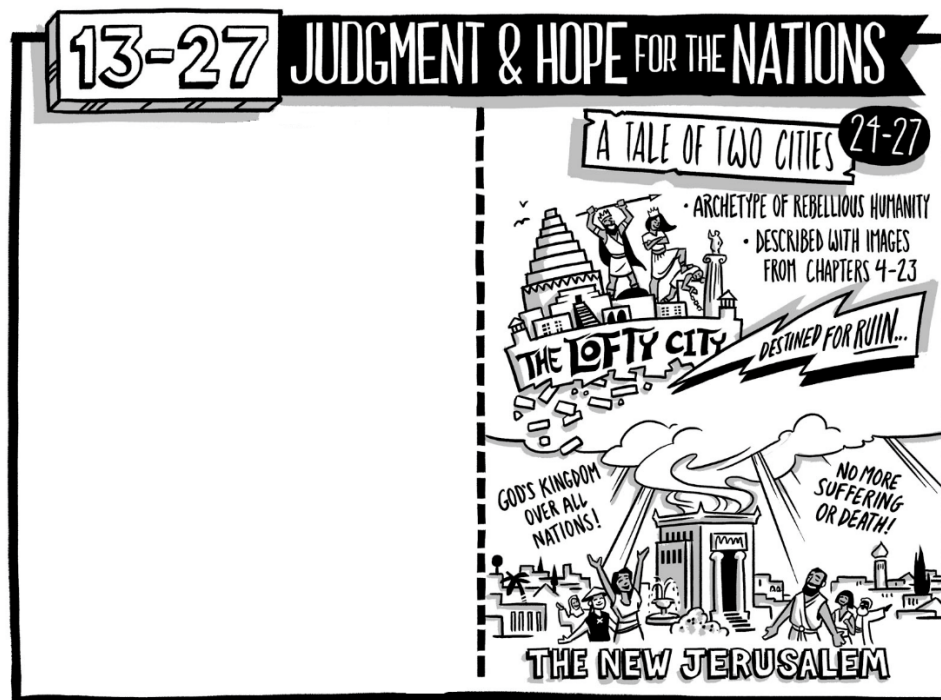
Isaiah 24–27

Carl L. Hanson, “Something About Mental Health,” BYU forum address, July 26, 2022,
<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/carl-l-hanson/something-about-mental-health/>.

Isaiah 24–27 is a distinct section of the book of Isaiah, yet at the same time is made up of several subsections whose relation to each other is sometimes unclear. These chapters are characterized by their cosmic imagery, with very few references to specific events or places in history. Although there may be various historical fulfillments to these prophecies, this universalized approach also makes it very easy to read them in end-of-the-world terms.

A recurring motif is the portrayal of two archetypal cities. The first represents rebellious humanity and is called “the lofty city” (26:5) and “the city of confusion” (24:10). The Class Translation renders the latter as “Without Form” City to show the connection with Genesis 1:2, where the same Hebrew word, *tōhû*, is translated “without form.” As Jehovah destroys this city, the allusion to Genesis suggests that Creation itself is being undone.

The second archetypal city represents the righteous people of the covenant. It is called *Jerusalem* a couple of times (24:23 and 27:13), but while there may be some fulfillments involving the actual Jerusalem, the city here also seems to represent the abode of the righteous more generally.



Impending Judgment on the Earth (24:1–23)

This section consists of five units:

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| Verses 1–3 | Jehovah is about to make the earth “empty” and “waste” and this will affect everyone regardless of their economic class or social status. |
| Verses 4–12 | The earth is “defiled” because the inhabitants have transgressed Jehovah’s laws and broken His covenant. |
| Verses 13–16a | The surviving remnant will sing praises to Jehovah. |
| Verses 16b–20 | A first-person voice laments ongoing treachery in the land. In the coming judgment, the earth itself will reel like a drunk person. |
| Verses 21–23 | Jehovah will imprison all other kings, whether on earth or heaven. He will then reign from Jerusalem as king over all creation. |

There are probably multiple ways you could read these descriptions. There could be an initial application in Isaiah’s time, in which case you would read these as poetically exaggerated descriptions of the devastation that Jehovah will bring upon Judah through the Assyrian invasion. There were other chaotic times in history where these descriptions could also apply. But the cosmic and universal imagery also makes it easy to read these as descriptions of the end of the world, what we would call the Second Coming of Christ. Interpreted that way, you would read these images of cosmic destruction in much more literal terms. Note that the King James Version translates the same Hebrew word, *’erets*, as both “land” (vv. 3, 11, 13) and “earth” (vv. 1, 4–6, 16–20) because the word can mean either. If you’re reading this chapter as being about the struggles of the covenant people earlier in history, then “land” might work better, but if you’re reading this chapter as being about the end of the world, then “earth” may be a better fit.

1. The earth is defiled because people have broken which covenant? What will Jehovah do to the “city of confusion” that represents rebellious humanity?
2. Isaiah 24:13 describes a remnant of people who survive all the destruction. God will gather them just like the owner of a vineyard will shake an olive tree or carefully glean the grape vines one last time, searching diligently for whatever good fruits might still be left to harvest. In vv. 14–16a this remnant “shall lift up their voice” and “sing” about Jehovah’s majesty. The Doctrine and Covenants also says that after the earth is cleansed of its wickedness that “all ... who remain ... shall lift up their voice” and “sing” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:98). Unlike the report of the singing in Isaiah, Doctrine and Covenants 84:99–102 provide the actual words that will be sung. Read those words and summarize in a sentence or two what this surviving remnant will sing about after the destruction of the wicked world. What most stands out to you and why?

A Song of Thanksgiving (25:1–5)

This is the first of two songs in these chapters of Isaiah. A voice speaking in the first person praises Jehovah for the wonderful things He has done, including the destruction of the unnamed, archetypal wicked city we already saw in chapter 24.

3. The song of thanksgiving recorded in Isaiah 25 praises Jehovah because He has toppled the “terrible” (cruel) and has been a “strength” (refuge) to what kinds of people?

A Banquet Where All Will Celebrate (25:6–12)

This scene depicts a banquet where Jehovah and the covenant people feast together to celebrate His victory. Similar images can be found in other scriptures, such as Revelation 19:9 and Doctrine and Covenants 58:6–9. The site of this communion will be a “mountain,” which to Isaiah’s contemporaries would have meant Jerusalem but can also be read more broadly as God’s temple. After describing this joyous celebration, the text transitions back to a description of the prideful world, represented by Moab, being humbled low to the ground.

4. The day will come when Jehovah will “swallow up” what forever? What will He “wipe away”?

A Song of Victory (26:1–6)

This is the second of the two songs in these chapters of Isaiah. The city of the righteous—they who were once a persecuted remnant—is now called “a strong city,” in contrast to the lofty city, which is now brought “low, even to the ground.” As with the other units in these chapters, you could read this as having applications both in ancient Israel (for example, Jehovah’s rescue of Jerusalem vs. the destruction of Nineveh or Babylon) and in the last days (where the cities would represent God’s kingdom vs. the devil’s).

5. In the song of victory recorded in Isaiah 26, the singer addresses Jehovah and observes that “thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” This peace comes because such people do what?

A Community Pleads to Jehovah (26:7–27:1)

This section depicts the united voice of the covenant community (“we,” “us,” “our”). They pray that Jehovah will intercede to stop their wicked oppressors, but also acknowledge Jehovah’s hand in their situation even if they do not experience relief at the present time.

6. After the community pleads to Jehovah, Jehovah responds that those who have died among them “shall live” and that “the earth shall cast out the dead.” With what/whom will their corpses arise? What do you think this is referring to?
7. Isaiah 27:1 describes a “serpent” or “dragon” called Leviathan. Watch the short video available [at this link](#). Leviathan was a cultural image or symbol that would have been very familiar to Isaiah’s ancient audience. What did this creature represent?
8. Isaiah 27:1 describes a “serpent” or “dragon” called Leviathan. What will Jehovah do to this creature and what tool will He use?

Scattered Israel Will Be Gathered (27:2–13)

This section opens by revisiting the imagery of a vineyard that appeared earlier in Isaiah (see Isaiah 5:1–7). Earlier, the vineyard brought forth wild grapes and the master of the vineyard laid it waste. Now He waters it and invites it to cling to Him for protection and peace. Not only does Jehovah no longer smite His vineyard, He actively protects it from those who would smite it. Israel’s sin will be forgiven as the people turn from idolatry, shattering the stones once used as altars to false gods. Still, recovery will take time, as shown by images of once-inhabited cities turning to wilderness and once-cultivated trees being used for nothing more than cooking fuel. But through the people’s trust in Jehovah, the day will come when He will gather scattered Israel “one by one” and they will worship Him in His holy temple.

9. Israel is compared to a fruit tree that will “blossom and bud,” providing fruit for what/whom? How does this relate to Israel’s mission in the Abrahamic covenant?

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The apocalyptic images in scriptures like Isaiah 24–27 should certainly motivate us to change our ways. However, Heavenly Father wants us to flourish, not just avoid sin, and that includes

taking care of both our physical and mental health. Even if you personally do not suffer from a mental illness, [Sister Reyna Aburto taught in general conference](#) that our covenants to “bear one another’s burdens” and “to mourn with those that mourn” (Mosiah 18:8–9) “include becoming informed about emotional illnesses [and] finding resources that can help address those struggles.” And all of us, whether we suffer from a clinical condition or not, need to seek physical and emotional wellness. This forum address by Carl Hanson addresses these vital topics.

Say Something

10. According to Dr. Hanson, mental health is *not* simply the opposite of mental illness. Explain what “flourishing” and “languishing” mean to modern psychologists.

Know Something

11. Some people believe that mental illnesses are the result of sin. What does Dr. Hanson say about that idea?

Be Something

Whole-Person Opportunity

Whole-Person Opportunity: Focus on the Quest

12. Because perfectionism is so damaging to mental health, sometimes people can get confused about the BYU Mission Statement’s description of our “quest for perfection and eternal life.” What does Dr. Hanson teach about how we should apply BYU’s Mission Statement?

Whole-Person Opportunity: Focus on Balance and Growth

Whole-Campus Responsibility

Conclusion