

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

Isaiah chapters 23--27

When you are going through a dark time, what is your typical response? What do you usually do? Worry? Lose sleep? Get depressed? Ask your friends to pray for you? I daresay few of us break out into song. The night seems so long and so dark, what is there to sing about? Aren't songs for happy times, for victorious times? And wouldn't you even seem crazy to be singing in the midst of grave trouble? Yet Isaiah found reasons to write songs even when he was talking about various judgments.

First we will look at the prophecy against Tyre. It could be labeled, "Do not build your hope on financial success." Chapter 23 is the last of Isaiah's prophecies against other nations, which began in chapter 13 with Babylon and ends here in the West with **Tyre**, which is in **Phoenicia**.

Tyre was one of the most famous cities of the ancient world and a major trading center with a large seaport. It was a very wealthy and very evil city.

As in the other prophecies, this one about **Tyre** also pertains to the Assyrian aggression at the end of the eighth century B.C. Though Tyre was not destroyed until some 200 years later, the trade of this great city was cut off between about 700 and 630 B.C.

We encounter here an evil society which serves as a *type* or illustration of this present evil world. Tyre as such is ruled by the evil forces of Satan. Tyre represents the great commercial systems of the world which bask in every possible luxury while forgetting God. But the day is soon coming when all the things that people have selfishly set their hearts upon will be destroyed and **this present world system will pass away**. We can see a prediction of this in the prophecy relating to the destruction of Tyre.

Isaiah 23:1-7:

***1 THIS MESSAGE CAME TO ME CONCERNING TYRE:** Weep, O ships of **Tarshish**, returning home from distant lands! Weep for your harbor at Tyre because it is gone! The rumors you heard in **Cyprus** are all true.
2 Mourn in silence, you people of the coast and you merchants of Sidon. Your traders crossed the sea,
3 sailing over deep waters. They brought you grain from Egypt and harvests from along the Nile. You were the merchandise mart of the world.
4 But now you are put to shame, city of Sidon, fortress on the sea. For the sea says, "Now I am childless; I have no sons or daughters."
5 When Egypt hears the news about Tyre, there will be great sorrow.
6 Flee now to Tarshish! Wail, you people who live by the sea!
7 How can this silent ruin be all that is left of your once joyous city? What*

a history was yours! Think of all the colonists you sent to distant lands.

This **oracle** begins with a call to a fleet of merchant ships to **wail** in distress during their trading voyages on the Mediterranean Sea. You may remember our discussion of Tarshish in an earlier chapter. Tarshish was most likely in Spain, so “*Ships of Tarshish*” were large trading ships capable of sailing great distances on the open sea all the way to the port of Tyre. Those ships were docked at the island of **Cyprus**, about 150 miles northwest of **Tyre**, when the news of Tyre’s destruction reached them.

Isaiah foresaw the complete destruction of Tyre whose ships reached every known port in the world of that day. **Sidon** was also a major seaport in Phoenicia but in no way was it the extent of Tyre. It must have seemed unbelievable at the time of Isaiah’s prophecy to think that this great city would soon be little more than a memory. The fall of this great city would affect nations as near as Egypt and as far away as Tarshish. It is possible that Tarshish could also be used here as a general term to refer to Spain and even Great Britain, from which great amounts of tin, lead, and other metals were mined. In fact, you might be interested to know that the very word “*Britannia*,” the ancient name for the island of Great Britain, means “*the land of tin*.”

We can well understand how the great merchant princes of Tyre were looked upon as the Donald Trumps of their day. They were held in the highest esteem.

Unfortunately such men rarely give the glory for their success to God who gave them the ability to amass such fortunes. Tyre gave God no credit whatsoever so God decided to punish them for their detestable pride and vanity.

Isaiah 23:8-17:

8 Who has brought this disaster on Tyre, empire builder and chief trader of the world?

*9 **THE LORD ALMIGHTY HAS DONE IT** to destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness.*

10 Come, Tarshish, sweep over your mother Tyre like the flooding Nile, for the city is defenseless.

*11 The Lord holds out his hand over the seas. He shakes the kingdoms of the earth. **He has spoken out against Phoenicia and depleted its strength.***

*12 He says, “Never again will you rejoice, O daughter of Sidon. Once you were a lovely city, but **you will never again be strong.** Even if you flee to Cyprus, you will find no rest.”*

*13 Look at the land of **BABYLONIA**—the people of that land are gone! **The ASSYRIANS have handed Babylon over to the wild beasts.** They have built siege ramps against its walls, torn down its palaces, and turned it into a heap of rubble.*

14 Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your home port is destroyed!

15 For seventy years, the length of a king’s life, Tyre will be forgotten. But then the city will come back to life and sing sweet songs like a prostitute.

16 Long absent from her lovers, she will take a harp, walk the streets, and sing her songs, so that she will again be remembered.

17 Yes, after seventy years the Lord will revive Tyre. But she will be no different than she was before. She will return again to all her evil ways around the world.

Assyria invaded Tyre in 705 B.C. and again in 681-669B.C. The message here is quite remarkable, however, in that Isaiah prophesied that the Babylonians, not yet a world power, would destroy Tyre. They did so in **572 B.C.**, a century after Isaiah made this prophecy. During that same seventy years that Judah remained in captivity in Babylon, Tyre was in a state of degradation and collapse. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, however, and the capture of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, Tyre was largely rebuilt, though it never again became the commercial city it once had been. Tyre was at last almost completely destroyed by the armies of Alexander the Great when he overcame the Persians and conquered most of Western Asia and Egypt.

Isaiah 23:18:

18 But in the end her businesses will give their profits to the Lord. Her wealth will not be hoarded but will be used to provide good food and fine clothing for the Lord's priests.

Tyre has never come into prominence since and yet **there is a future blessing predicted for it**. It is evident in the last verse of this chapter that, like so many other prophetic scriptures, this one takes us beyond the present time to the establishment of Christ's kingdom on the earth during the Millennium. In that day a new city will arise on the current ruins of Tyre and that city will bring glory and honor to the reign of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah Chapter 24

THE TRIBULATION, GOD'S JUDGMENT, AND JESUS' SECOND COMING

Isaiah chapters 24 - 27 are often called "*Isaiah's Apocalypse*." They discuss God's judgment on the entire world for its sin. Isaiah's prophecies were first directed to Judah, then to Israel, then to the surrounding nations, and finally to the whole world. These 4 chapters describe the last days when God will judge the whole world, and when good will finally and permanently conquer evil. Chapters 24-27 describe the earth's devastation and people's intense suffering during the coming **Tribulation** and the blessings to follow in the **millennial kingdom**.

Isaiah 24:1-12:

1 Look! The Lord is about to destroy the earth and make it a vast wasteland. See how he is scattering the people over the face of the earth.

2 Priests and laypeople, servants and masters, maids and mistresses,

buyers and sellers, lenders and borrowers, bankers and debtors—none will be spared.

3 The earth will be completely emptied and looted. The Lord has spoken!

4 The earth dries up, the crops wither, the skies refuse to rain.

5 The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted the instructions of God, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant.

6 Therefore, a curse consumes the earth and its people. They are left desolate, destroyed by fire. Few will be left alive.

7 All the joys of life will be gone. The grape harvest will fail, and there will be no wine. The merry-makers will sigh and mourn.

8 The clash of tambourines will be stilled; the happy cries of celebration will be heard no more. The melodious chords of the harp will be silent.

9 Gone are the joys of wine and song; strong drink now turns bitter in the mouth.

10 The city writhes in chaos; every home is locked to keep out looters.

11 Mobs gather in the streets, crying out for wine. Joy has reached its lowest ebb. Gladness has been banished from the land.

12 The city is left in ruins, with its gates battered down.

The coming desolation and ruin of the whole earth will be by the direct intervention of the LORD, and will level all of the world's population who fail to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. No advantage will come from having a high rather than a low position, for all will come under God's hand of judgment (verse 2). The world will be laid waste and totally plundered (verse 3; see also Revelation 6; 8-9; 15-16). This is certain because the LORD said so.

In this worldwide judgment, the earth will dry up so that no crops can grow. No one will be spared from this eschatological (end times) judgment. The reason such devastation will occur is that the people have not lived as God instructed them to live and they have polluted the earth. In creating the world God said it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). But people in their sin defiled the good earth by disobeying God's laws, violating His statutes, and breaking His everlasting covenant. "The everlasting covenant" probably refers not to the Abrahamic or Mosaic Covenants but to the covenant people implicitly had with God **to obey His Word**. Right from the very beginning mankind refused to live according to God's Word (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6; Hosea 6:7). And throughout history people have refused to obey God's revelation (revealing of divine truth).

Because people have "defiled" the earth by their sins (verse 5), judgment will come. They must bear the consequences of their guilt. God's judgment is likened to a burning fire that consumes all but a few on the earth. In the earth's devastation vineyards will wither and music will stop.

Isaiah 24:13-15:

*13 Throughout the earth the story is the same—like the stray olives left on the tree or the few grapes left on the vine after harvest, **ONLY A REMNANT***

IS LEFT.

14 But all who are left will shout and sing for joy. Those in the west will praise the Lord's majesty.

15 In eastern lands, give glory to the Lord. In the coastlands of the sea, praise the name of the Lord, the God of Israel.

The fruit of the vine is often associated in the Bible with joy (Isaiah 16:9; Zechariah 10:7), and that will stop as well. The city (Isaiah. 24:10; 25:2), which represents the whole earth (Isaiah 24:13), **will be in ruins** with all its houses uninhabited. When God pours out His wrath on the unbelieving world in the Tribulation, all will be desolate and gloomy. Little will be left, as after the harvesting of olives or grapes.

The remnant refers to the righteous who will be left after God's judgment on the earth. Though few in number (verse 6) they will delight in the fact that the earth is cleansed from people's sin. They will raise their voices and shout to proclaim glory to the LORD . . . the God of Israel. Everywhere--in the west, the east, the islands of the sea, and the ends of the earth--the same song is proclaimed: Glory to God, the Righteous One. The believing remnant will view the earth's desolation as a righteous act by the righteous God. It will not be viewed in the way the Assyrian advance was viewed, as a cruel, unfair punishment.

Isaiah 24:16-20:

*16 Listen to them as they sing to the Lord from the ends of the earth. Hear them singing praises to the Righteous One! **But my heart is heavy with grief. I am discouraged, for evil still prevails, and treachery is everywhere.***

17 Terror and traps and snares will be your lot, you people of the earth.

*18 Those who flee in terror will fall into a trap, and those who escape the trap will step into a snare. **Destruction falls on you from the heavens.** The world is shaken beneath you.*

19 The earth has broken down and has utterly collapsed. Everything is lost, abandoned, and confused.

20 The earth staggers like a drunkard. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls and will not rise again, for its sins are very great.

In contrast with the future joyful song of glory to the God of Israel (verse 16), the distress in Isaiah's day caused him grief. Isaiah was deeply grieved by the suffering the people were going to have to go through because of their treachery. Because of the people's treachery and their other sins, they would suffer. Trying to escape one danger they will be overcome by another calamity. God's judgment will be like a great rainstorm and earthquake. The earthquake will cause great crevices to open in the earth and swallow up people. In the earthquake the earth will reel like a drunkard and will sway like a temporary unsteady hut in a field, blowing in the wind.

Isaiah 24:21-23:

21 In that day the Lord will punish the fallen angels in the heavens and the

proud rulers of the nations on earth.

22 They will be rounded up and put in prison until they are tried and condemned.

23 Then the Lord Almighty will mount his throne on Mount Zion. He will rule gloriously in Jerusalem, in the sight of all the leaders of his people. There will be such glory that the brightness of the sun and moon will seem to fade away.

Isaiah again stated that the coming judgment will be God's direct intervention for punishment. The powers in the heavens may refer to spiritual forces opposed to God (Revelation 19:20; 20:2). The kings on the earth below undoubtedly refer to political forces that will be banished. Those powers in the heavens and on the earth will become like cattle when the Lord herds them together and places them like prisoners in a dungeon. Their punishment after many days refers to the great white throne judgment after the Millennium when all the unrighteous will have to stand before God and be judged for their evil deeds and lack of faith in Him (Revelation 20:11-15). When this judgment takes place the LORD, the Messiah, will be reigning on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. He will reign gloriously, that is, His glory will be made evident. In the 1,000-year kingdom the Messiah will reign as King over the earth (Zechariah 14:9) from Jerusalem. After the Millennium and the great white throne judgment God will reign for eternity from the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2, 10), which will be filled with the glory of God and therefore will not need the light of the moon or the sun (Revelation 21:23).¹

Isaiah Chapter 25

THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE LORD WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED

Isaiah 25:1-12:

1 O Lord, I will honor and praise your name, for you are my God. You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago, and now you have accomplished them.

2 You turn mighty cities into heaps of ruins. Cities with strong walls are turned to rubble. Beautiful palaces in distant lands disappear and will never be rebuilt.

3 Therefore, strong nations will declare your glory; ruthless nations will revere you.

4 But to the poor, O Lord, you are a refuge from the storm. To the needy in distress, you are a shelter from the rain and the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall, 5 or like the relentless heat of the desert. But you silence the roar of

¹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition

*foreign nations. You cool the land with the shade of a cloud. **So the boastful songs of ruthless people are stilled.***

6 In Jerusalem, the Lord Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef.

7 In that day he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth.

8 He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The Lord has spoken!

9 In that day the people will proclaim, "This is our God. We trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!"

10 For the Lord's good hand will rest on Jerusalem. Moab will be crushed like trampled straw and left to rot.

11 God will push down Moab's people as a swimmer pushes down water with his hands. He will end their pride and all their evil works.

12 The high walls of Moab will be demolished and ground to dust.

Isaiah has been so overwhelmed that he breaks into song here: "*Oh, Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name; for Thou hast worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.*" As he pens the words the Holy Spirit gives him, he is awed by the perfection and wonders of God's perfect planning for His people. Then Isaiah proceeds to list some of the works of God.

Here is another wonderful glimpse of who God is. While the book of Isaiah can feel very heavy at times with its judgments and pronouncements of doom, the heaviness is broken up at points with these glorious descriptions of God and what He does.

This chapter and much of the next give us another picture of God.

Isaiah cannot contain himself as he is writing these predictions of the judgment of the enemies of God and His people. He has to write words of praise: "*I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name*" for all the things God is doing and is promising to do.

And what kind of God is Isaiah praising? He is a God who destroys ruthless cities and nations. He is a refuge for the poor and needy during their distress. He avenges His people. He will prepare a lavish banquet for His children. And one day God will destroy death, wipe away tears, and remove the reproach of His people. His good hand will be on His people.

In these verses we see the long promised believing remnant of Israel who have come to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior at His Second Coming. Isaiah responds to God's final judgment on the world with praise to Him for planning these actions long ago. It is

most likely that the cities referred to here as being destroyed represent the world government of Babylon. When Jesus reigns upon the earth during the Millennium, nations from the whole earth will glorify and fear Him (Isaiah 24:14-16).

Isaiah also thanks God for being a shelter to the poor and needy throughout history. Then we see this marvelous celebration beginning in verse 6 when the Gentiles will join the Jews at God's feast to celebrate the overthrow of evil and the reality of eternity with God. It shows that God intended His saving message **for all people everywhere**, not just to the Jews. During the feast God will put an end to death forever. **The people participating in this feast will be those who have been living by faith and are now being rewarded.** Finally we see a reference to Moab which is a symbol of all who oppose God and are rebellious right up to the end.

Isaiah Chapter 26

THE GATES OF THE KINGDOM ARE OPENED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD

Next, in chapter 26, Isaiah wrote a joyous song that will be sung not only by the people of Judah, but also by the redeemed when the Messiah will establish the millennial kingdom on the earth. Isaiah was picturing himself standing in the redeemed land with the remnant listening to the people express their thanks to and their confidence in God. We are going to take a close look at that song.

Isaiah 26:1-6:

1 In that day, everyone in the land of Judah will sing this song: Our city is now strong! We are surrounded by the walls of God's salvation.

*2 **Open the gates to all who are righteous; allow the faithful to enter.***

*3 **You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!***

*4 **TRUST IN THE LORD ALWAYS, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock.***

*5 **HE HUMBLER THE PROUD and brings the arrogant city to the dust. Its walls come crashing down!***

*6 **The poor and oppressed trample it underfoot.***

The humble will be rewarded. This song to be sung in Judah, first emphasizes a reversal of fortunes. The humble will now be exalted while the oppressors will be overcome. In contrast with "the city" that will be destroyed (Isaiah 24:12-13; 25:2), the redeemed will have a strong city. Throughout the world the redeemed will live in cities and towns, but the strong city of Jerusalem where the Messiah dwells is seen as the city representing the world's redeemed inhabitants. Because of the Messiah's presence there, that city is figuratively said to have salvation for its walls and ramparts.

This city will be opened for the righteous, a reference to the remnant of believers throughout the world. People who trust in the LORD will enjoy perfect peace, now as

well as in the Millennium.² This availability of inner tranquility encourages believers to continue trusting the LORD because He is firm like a Rock (Isaiah 17:10; 44:8); and He is eternal.

The arrogant and prideful people of the world will be destroyed because they did not trust in God. The poor and needy, the lowly, persecuted, despised people of God who suffered hardship and discrimination in this life will see the power and arrogance of the world crushed to the ground.³ This will be an act of God's justice against the proud who took advantage of the poor. Isaiah was reflecting the scriptural principle that God has special concern for the poor who seek Him.

Isaiah 26:7-11:

7 But for those who are righteous, the path is not steep and rough. You are a God of justice, and you smooth out the road ahead of them.

8 Lord, we love to obey your laws; our heart's desire is to glorify your name.

9 All night long I search for you; earnestly I seek for God. For only when you come to judge the earth will people turn from wickedness and do what is right.

10 Your kindness to the wicked does not make them do good. They keep doing wrong and take no notice of the Lord's majesty.

11 O Lord, they do not listen when you threaten. They do not see your upraised fist. Show them your eagerness to defend your people. Perhaps then they will be ashamed. Let your fire consume your enemies.

The song continues by expressing the certainty that deliverance has come to the remnant, not because of their own efforts, but because of God's work on their behalf. Therefore they will continue to trust in Him. In a confession of trust the prophet affirmed that it is good for people to live righteously, because God smoothes out their path. That does not mean righteous people never have any problems. Isaiah was reflecting the truth that certain consequences follow one's actions so that if a person lives according to God's rules he will have favorable consequences, but if he disregards God's Word he will experience dire consequences.

The remnant walk according to God's laws and long to be in His presence. Those who refuse to live according to God's will learn of God's righteousness when they are eventually judged. Many wicked people do not understand righteousness when God offers it as a free gift of grace, but learn about it only when He judges them. Living where the righteousness of God is revealed in the kingdom of Judah was not enough for many people who would still not live righteously. A favorable environment is not enough; there

² Philippians 4:7.

³ Pfeiffer, C. F. 1962. The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament . Moody Press: Chicago

must be a change of heart. Going to church regularly and attending Bible studies is also not sufficient, if those attitudes do not lead a person into a close relationship with Jesus Christ.

Though chapter 26 is a song of the redeemed, verses 10-11 indicate that Isaiah was writing for the people of his day, many of whom were spiritually in denial about God's majesty and the works of His hand. Isaiah asked the Lord to put them to shame (verse 11) and to take vengeance on them. In this way God's character would be maintained. Isaiah was not asking this for his own sake but for the sake of God who desires that His people lead holy lives.

Isaiah 26:12-15:

12 Lord, you will grant us peace, for all we have accomplished is really from you.

13 O Lord our God, others have ruled us, but we worship you alone.

14 Those we served before are dead and gone. Never again will they return! You attacked them and destroyed them, and they are long forgotten.

15 We praise you, Lord! You have made our nation great; you have extended our borders!

In the kingdom of God believers will enjoy the peace God provides as well as recognize God's work on their behalf. They will confirm over and over again that they will remain loyal to Him even though they had at one time been under the domination of others. Those who once dominated the remnant will be dead under God's judgment. The remnant will live as a great nation in the land God promised the patriarchs and their descendants in Genesis 15:18:

18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

Isaiah now switches gears and speaks of those who because of their unbelief will not be saved.

Isaiah 26:16-19:

16 Lord, in distress we searched for you. We were bowed beneath the burden of your discipline.

17 We were like a woman about to give birth, writhing and crying out in pain. When we are in your presence, Lord,

18 We, too, writhe in agony, but nothing comes of our suffering. We have done nothing to rescue the world; no one has been born to populate the earth.

19 Yet we have this assurance: those who belong to God will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For God's light of life will fall like dew on his people in the place

of the dead!

Isaiah continues with his praise. His people had been in such distress they could only pray in a whisper. They had been under God's judgment for 70 years. The closer they got to the time of deliverance, the more distressed they felt. He likens their experience to a woman in childbirth. But only God could deliver them.

This passage also seems to be referring to the End Times. The unbelievers in the nation of Israel and the rest of the world will not experience deliverance. Unbelievers in Israel and the rest of the world will be judged and will not enter the Millennium.

Then verse 19 ends the song with a note of triumph. Those who trust in God and have a relationship with God will live again. "*The earth will give birth to departed spirits*" is a lovely description of the resurrection: those who have died and been buried in the earth will come forth to new, resurrected life.

Isaiah was confident that Judah's believing dead would be resurrected. When they wake up, when their bodies are resurrected, they will shout for joy. They will be refreshed in the way morning dew refreshes the grass (Hosea 14:5). That is, they will experience God's blessings in the Millennium.

Isaiah 26:20-21

20 Go home, you people, and lock your doors! Hide until the Lord's anger against your enemies has passed.

21 Look! The Lord is coming from heaven to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will no longer hide those who have been murdered. They will be brought out for all to see.

The song in verses 1-19 is directed to God. These last two verses of the chapter are now directed to the people. In light of all God has done and will do Isaiah tells the remnant to hide, to wait till all this comes about. Verse 21 actually summarizes the events described in Revelation chapters 6 through 19.

Isaiah wrote that the future remnant should hide during the time of distress, which will be the time of God's wrath during the Tribulation, knowing that deliverance from the Lord will come. Eventually the Lord will set matters right by punishing people for their sins. All sins will be made known and the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her. These words would have encouraged the remnant in Isaiah's day to remain true to the LORD, knowing that He will eventually judge sin. After that judgment is accomplished, believers will be able to sing the song recorded here in chapter 26.⁴

Isaiah Chapter 27

⁴ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

GOD'S PEOPLE COME HOME

Isaiah 27:1:

*1 **In that day** the Lord will take his terrible, swift sword and punish Leviathan, the swiftly moving serpent, the coiling, writhing serpent, the dragon of the sea.*

Again we see the phrase “*In that Day*” which clues us this pertains to the end times, so this verse, referring to the culmination of God’s judgment on the world, ties in with the judgment mentioned in 26:21. With a sword the LORD will cut up a great serpent called Leviathan. This swiftly moving serpent is the many-headed sea dragon mentioned in Psalm 74:13-14. In Ugaritic literature (Ugarit being a city-state in North Syria) reference is made to a similar seven-headed creature. Isaiah, though not believing this ancient Semitic myth, simply referred to Leviathan to convey his point. This creature is also mentioned in Job 3:8. Leviathan, the twisting monster of the sea, was viewed in Ugaritic literature as an enemy of order in Creation. But God can stop this chaotic state and establish order on the earth and in people’s hearts. When God’s judgment comes in that day, when He slays the wicked at the end of the Tribulation, it will be like His slaying the menacing dragon Leviathan.

This verse is loaded with symbolism. Leviathan—the dragon, the serpent—clearly makes us think of Satan who entered the serpent so he could tempt Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Ever since, we have associated the serpent with Satan. In Revelation 12 Satan is pictured as a dragon, who tries to kill the baby of the woman. The woman represents the nation of Israel and the baby represents Christ. The term “*sea*” is sometimes used in the Bible to symbolize “nations” (Isaiah 60:5; Daniel 7:3; Revelation 13:1) or “people” (Isaiah 17:12; Jeremiah 6:23). So you can get a picture from verse one of God punishing Satan (Leviathan), the dragon who has been roaming the earth seeking to devour whomever he can (1 Peter 5:8).

Isaiah 27:2-6:

*2 “In that day we will sing of the pleasant vineyard.
3 I, the Lord, will watch over it and tend its fruitful vines. Each day I will water them; day and night I will watch to keep enemies away.
4 My anger against Israel will be gone. If I find briars and thorns bothering her, I will burn them up.
5 These enemies will be spared only if they surrender and beg for peace and protection.”
6 The time is coming when my people will take root. Israel will bud and blossom and fill the whole earth with her fruit!*

Starting with verses 2-11 we encounter another hymn; this one gives us God’s point of view. Again we find symbolism. The vineyard symbolizes Israel (see Isaiah 5:7). In the song of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7 destruction was emphasized; in the song of the vineyard here in Isaiah 27:2-6 the promise of protection is the primary theme. In the first song the vineyard was to be made a wasteland because of the people’s sinful condition. In

the second song the vineyard, Israel, is to be made fruitful. After God judges Israel in verse 1, the nation will be spiritually fruitful. This fruitfulness comes because of the Lord's constant protection and care in verse 3. If the vineyard (Israel) does not please the LORD, He must judge it, verse 4; but He much prefers that they turn to Him in repentance as their Refuge, verse 5. This desire that Israel be in the proper covenant relationship with Him is born out by the comment, "*These enemies will be spared only if they surrender and beg for peace and protection.*" When the Kingdom Age arrives, Israel will be productive again (Isaiah 35:1-3, 6-7; Amos 9:13-14; Zechariah 14:8) and will be the nation through which God will bless the world (Genesis 12:3).

Isaiah 27:7-8:

*7 Has the Lord punished Israel in the same way he has punished her enemies? No, for he devastated her enemies,
8 but he has punished Israel only a little. He has exiled her from her land as though blown away in a storm from the east.*

Because God cares for His people He will judge them and purify them so they can be fruitful. Isaiah foretold that judgment would come on Israel. But He will not treat her the way He treats her enemies. Even in chastening or discipline God's love and care for His people is evident. He will judge Israel by warfare and exile (Deuteronomy 28:64-68). The east wind in verse 8 may refer figuratively to Babylon, east of Israel, which took Judah into captivity. The Exile would help purify Judah so that she would not worship foreign gods and goddesses. From the time Israel returned from exile in Babylon she never again worshipped any false gods.

Isaiah 27:9-11

*9 The Lord did this to purge away Israel's sin. When he has finished, all the pagan altars will be crushed to dust. There won't be an Asherah pole or incense altar left standing.
10 Israel's fortified cities will be silent and empty, the houses abandoned, the streets covered with grass. Cattle will graze there, chewing on twigs and branches.
11 The people are like the dead branches of a tree, broken off and used for kindling beneath the cooking pots. Israel is a foolish and stupid nation, for its people have turned away from God. Therefore, the one who made them will show them no pity or mercy.*

The sin of the nation of Judah had to be atoned for. Of course atonement for all sin is through the death of Jesus Christ. But in view of Israel's covenant relationship with God, she had to be driven out of the land because of her disobedience to the Law (Deuteronomy 28:49-52, 64). Evidence of that atonement would be her pulverizing her altar stones dedicated to idolatrous gods, and removing the Asherah poles, wooden symbols of the Canaanite pagan goddess of fertility.

Because of Judah's sin, her city, Jerusalem, would be destroyed and its people removed.

Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. and was left desolate. Isaiah said calves would graze in Jerusalem's ruins and being hungry would strip tree branches of their bark. Women then would cut off the branches and use them for firewood. In judging His senseless people, God, their Maker and Creator, temporarily withdrew His compassion on them.

Isaiah 27:12-13:

12 Yet the time will come when the Lord will gather them together one by one like handpicked grain. He will bring them to his great threshing floor—from the Euphrates River in the east to the brook of Egypt in the west.

13 In that day the great trumpet will sound. Many who were dying in exile in Assyria and Egypt will return to Jerusalem to worship the Lord on his holy mountain.

The Lord promised that in that day He will thresh, that is he will judge, a large area from the Euphrates River to the Wadi of Egypt. In other words the Lord will judge this large area of land for the purpose of bringing His people back to Jerusalem. The Wadi of Egypt may be the stream that marks the southwest border of Canaan (Numbers 34:4-5; 1 Kings 8:65). Or perhaps it refers to the Nile, since the point of Isaiah 27:13 is that the Lord will regather His people from both Assyria and Egypt, two great enemies of Israel throughout most of her history up to Assyria's fall in 609 B.C. The people will be re-gathered to the holy mountain in Jerusalem, that is, the temple mount where the Messiah will reign (Isaiah 24:23). In God's kingdom on earth Israel will dwell in the land of Palestine as believers.

Truly the people of Judah would have much to sing about after God brought them out of the dark night of captivity back to their homeland, and from the darkness of being scattered among the nations into eternal redemption.

What about you? Can you lift your voice in songs of praise to God even when you are going through a dark place? Job spoke of "*God my Maker, who gives songs in the night*" (Job 35:10). The psalmists also referred to the song God gives in the night:

Psalm 77:6, NAS

I will remember my song in the night; I will meditate with my heart; and my spirit ponders.

Psalm 42:8, NAS

*The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; and **His song will be with me in the night**, a prayer to the God of my life.*

From these verses we learn several things: God is the One who gives songs in the night, we can't conjure them up ourselves. We are to remember God's songs during our long dark nights, and even to use them as a prayer to God. Isaiah's songs burst forth as he thought about who God is and what He was doing.

When you are walking in close intimacy with God, He gives you the song of praise to Him, even when your current circumstances seem as dark as night. Then you can know with certainty that the night is short and it will be done away with by the light of the Holy One, by Jesus Christ who is the Light of the World.