

Isaiah 24:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

Analysis

Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste—the Hebrew *baqaq* (בָּקַדַּ, "empty") and *balaq* (בָּלַדַּ, "waste") are intensive verbs depicting violent devastation. The threefold action—emptying, wasting, and **turneth it upside down** (*avah*, אָוָה, "distort/overturn")—portrays complete reversal of creation order, undoing Genesis 1's organizing work. This cosmic uncreation foreshadows Revelation's final judgment (Rev 21:1).

Scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof uses *puts* (פָּצַח), the same verb for Babel's scattering (Gen 11:8-9), linking humanity's judgment to covenant rebellion. Isaiah 24-27 (the "Isaiah Apocalypse") universalizes judgment beyond Israel to encompass *ha'aretz* (אֶרֶץ, "the earth/land")—both territorial Israel and the entire world. This double reference establishes that local judgments prefigure eschatological consummation when God judges all nations.

Historical Context

Isaiah 24-27 forms a distinct apocalyptic section composed during the Assyrian crisis (745-701 BC), when regional empires threatened Judah's existence. Unlike oracles against specific nations (chapters 13-23), these chapters envision universal judgment. The terminology echoes Deuteronomic covenant curses (Deut 28:63-64) where God promised to scatter covenant-breakers, but Isaiah expands this to cosmic scope—all humanity faces accountability to the Creator.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the image of God 'turning the earth upside down' challenge modern assumptions about human progress and stability?
2. What connections do you see between the Babel scattering and this universal judgment? How does covenant-breaking lead to dispersion?
3. In what ways does this passage warn against building security on earthly foundations rather than covenant faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

הִנֵּה ה	יְהוָה ה	בֹּקֶה ק	הָאֶרֶץ רֵץ	וּבֹלֵק ה
H2009	Behold the LORD	empty	maketh the earth	and maketh it waste
	H3068	H1238	H776	H1110
וְעָוָה ה	כָּפֹה יְה	וְהִפֵּי יֵץ	יֹשְׁבֵיהֶּ:	
and turneth	it upside down	and scattereth abroad	the inhabitants	
H5753	H6440	H6327	H3427	

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 2:10 (Parallel theme): She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

Isaiah 42:15 (Parallel theme): I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

Isaiah 24:20 (Parallel theme): The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

Isaiah 2:19 (References Lord): And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Ezekiel 35:14 (References Lord): Thus saith the Lord GOD; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.

Ezekiel 6:6 (Parallel theme): In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.