

Isaiah 24:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved,
the earth is moved exceedingly.

Analysis

The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. This verse intensifies the apocalyptic description of divine judgment on the earth. The threefold repetition of "the earth" (ha'aretz, הָאָרֶץ) with escalating verbs creates a crescendo of catastrophic imagery. "Utterly broken down" translates ro'ah hitro'a'ah (רָעָה הִתְרַעְעָה), an intensive construction meaning completely shattered or broken to pieces—like pottery smashed beyond repair.

"Clean dissolved" uses porah hitporerah (פּוֹרָה הִתְפּוֹרְרָה), meaning entirely crumbled or disintegrated—the earth's very structure falling apart. "Moved exceedingly" employs mot hitmottetah (מוֹט הִתְמוֹטְטָה), describing violent shaking, tottering, or reeling like a drunkard (verse 20 develops this image). Each verb appears in an intensive form emphasizing thoroughness and completeness of destruction.

This cosmic upheaval results from earth's inhabitants transgressing laws, violating statutes, and breaking the everlasting covenant (24:5). The judgment is universal—affecting both "the earth" (the physical planet) and "the world" (tebel, תֵּבֵל, the inhabited world). Isaiah's vision anticipates the Day of the LORD, when God will judge all creation before establishing His eternal kingdom. The New Testament echoes this imagery in descriptions of Christ's return and the final judgment (Matthew 24:29-30, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 6:12-17).

Historical Context

Isaiah 24-27, often called 'Isaiah's Apocalypse,' stands somewhat apart from the surrounding oracles against specific nations. These chapters describe universal judgment and ultimate redemption, likely dating to Isaiah's prophetic ministry (740-681 BCE) but with cosmic scope transcending historical specifics. Unlike earlier chapters addressing Judah, Assyria, or Babylon specifically, these chapters envision worldwide judgment.

The reference to breaking 'the everlasting covenant' (24:5) may allude to the Noahic covenant (Genesis 9:1-17), God's universal covenant with all humanity and creation. Earth's inhabitants have violated this fundamental order through violence, corruption, and covenant-breaking. The judgment described resembles the Flood but encompasses more than water—cosmic dissolution and restructuring.

For Isaiah's contemporaries facing Assyrian aggression and moral decline, this vision served multiple purposes: it assured that God would judge all wickedness, not just Israel's enemies; it placed historical judgments within a larger eschatological framework; and it promised that God's redemptive purposes would ultimately triumph over all opposition. Post-exilic readers would find hope that despite near-term catastrophes, God's ultimate plan includes cosmic renewal. Christians see this as pointing toward Christ's second coming and the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21-22).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do these images of cosmic dissolution relate to the 'everlasting covenant' mentioned in Isaiah 24:5?

2. What is the relationship between historical judgments (like exile) and this ultimate cosmic judgment?
3. How does this passage contribute to biblical eschatology and the Day of the LORD theme?
4. In what ways do New Testament descriptions of Christ's return echo Isaiah's apocalyptic imagery?
5. What comfort and warning does this vision provide for believers facing present troubles?

Interlinear Text

הַתְּרַעֵץ הַ	הַתְּרַעֵץ הַ	אָרֶץ:	הַתְּפוֹרֶכֶה	הַתְּפוֹרֶכֶה	אָרֶץ:
broken down	broken down	The earth	dissolved	dissolved	The earth
H7489	H7489	H776	H6565	H6565	H776

הַתְּמוֹטָה הַ	הַתְּמוֹטָה הַ	אָרֶץ:
exceedingly	exceedingly	The earth
H4131	H4131	H776

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 20:11 (Parallel theme): And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Nahum 1:5 (Parallel theme): The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

Deuteronomy 11:6 (Parallel theme): And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel: