

37. Defining the End-Time “Day of the Lord” (Isaiah 13–14, 24–30, 35)

The end-time “Day of the Lord” or “Day of Jehovah”—God’s worldwide Day of Judgment—compares with the Flood in the days of Noah in magnitude. God predetermined from the earth’s foundation that a time would come when all wicked persons would be erased from its face so that the righteous who remained—those who had repented of their sins and iniquities—might live in a better world. Nevertheless, evils on the earth would so multiply and reach a saturation point that it was necessary for God to intervene to cleanse it of all celestial beings and perdition types. When these threatened to exterminate the people of God, that would be the time he would reverse their circumstances. Until that hour, God would test the loyalties of his people.

For those who have never experienced the trauma of war, Isaiah’s end-time scenario is almost unthinkable—a veritable apocalyptic doomsday were it not for provision God has made for a but tithing of the earth’s inhabitants to be saved. And almost all of those would be required to wade through extreme calamities while only a tithe of the tithe would escape entirely by God’s direct divine intervention. Several preludes to God’s Day of Judgment, however, serve as warnings of worse to come. If people takes heed and repents, well and good, but if not they will perish. As in scriptural patterns of the past, moreover, it is the end-time apostasy of God’s own people that acts as the catalyst of this worldwide catastrophe. When they forfeit their blessing by denying their God, none are left to justify God’s sparing the world.

The end-time king of Assyria is the one who launches a cataclysmic destruction upon the world: “Raise the ensign on a barren mountain; sound the voice among them! Beckon them with the hand to advance into the precincts of the elite. I have charged my holy ones, called out my valiant ones: my anger is not upon those who take pride in me” (Isaiah 13:2–3).

“Hark! A tumult on the mountains, as of a vast multitude. Hark! An uproar among kingdoms, as of nations assembling: Jehovah of Hosts is marshaling an army for war. They come from a distant land beyond the horizon—Jehovah and the instruments of his wrath—to cause destruction throughout the earth. Lament, for the Day of Jehovah is near; it shall come as a violent blow from the Almighty. Then shall every hand grow weak and the hearts of all men melt. They shall be terrified, in throes of agony, seized with trembling like a woman in labor. Men will look at one another aghast, their faces set aflame. The Day of Jehovah shall come as a cruel outburst of anger and wrath to make the earth a desolation, that sinners may be annihilated from it” (Isaiah 13:4–9).

Personifying God’s anger and wrath, his rage and fury, the end-time king of Assyria wreaks God’s vengeance upon a wicked world: “Jehovah’s rage is upon all nations, his fury upon all their hosts; he has doomed them, consigned them to the slaughter. Their slain shall be flung out and their corpses emit a stench; their blood shall dissolve on the mountains, their fat decompose [on the hills]—when the heavens are rolled up as a scroll, and their starry hosts shed themselves with one accord, like withered leaves from a vine, or shriveled fruit from a fig tree. When my sword drinks its fill in the heavens, it shall come down on Edom in judgment, on the people I have sentenced to damnation” (Isaiah 34:2–5).

“The stars and constellations of the heavens will not shine. When the sun rises, it shall be obscured; nor will the moon give its light. I have decreed calamity for the world, punishment for the wicked; I will put an end to the arrogance of insolent men and humble the pride of tyrants. I will make mankind scarcer than fine gold, men [more rare] than gold of Ophir. I will cause disturbance in the heavens when the earth is jolted out of place by the anger of Jehovah of Hosts in the day of his blazing wrath” (Isaiah 13:10–13).

“Jehovah will lay waste the earth and empty it; he will disfigure its surface and scatter its inhabitants. And it shall be with priest as with people, with master as with servant, with mistress as with maid, with seller as with buyer, with borrower as with lender, with debtor as with creditor—when the earth is sacked, it shall be utterly ravaged” (Isaiah 24:1–3).

“The earth shall pine away, the world miserably perish; the elite of the earth shall be made wretched. The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants: they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, set at naught the ancient covenant. The curse devours the earth, for those who dwell on it have incurred guilt; because of it the population of the earth shall be diminished and little of mankind remain” (Isaiah 24:4–6).

“The rhythm of drums ceases, the revelers’ din stops; the pulsating of lyres comes to an end. Men no longer drink wine amid song; liquor has turned bitter to drinkers. The towns of disorder are broken up; all houses are shuttered, that none may enter. Outside is [heard] the clamor for wine, though all joy has become gloom: the earth’s vitality is gone. Havoc remains in the city; the gates lie battered to ruin” (Isaiah 24:8–12).

“Terrors and pitfalls and traps await you, O inhabitants of the earth: those who flee at the sound of terror shall fall into a pit, and those who get up from the pit shall be caught in a trap. For when the windows on high are opened, the earth shall shake to its foundations. The earth shall be crushed and rent; the earth shall break up and cave in; the earth shall convulse and lurch. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, sway back and forth like a shanty; its transgressions weigh it down, and when it collapses it shall rise no more” (Isaiah 24:17–20).

God counsels his people who remain loyal to him to hide themselves for a time while the world self-destructs: “Come, O my people, enter your chambers and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves a little while until the wrath is past. For now will Jehovah come out of his dwelling place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities; the earth will uncover the blood shed upon it and no more conceal its slain” (Isaiah 26:20–21).

Also called “king of Babylon”—after conquerors of Babylon who called themselves by that name—the end-time king of Assyria is himself put down when he has served God’s purpose of destroying those who failed to repent when warned: “You have been brought down to Sheol, to the utmost depths of the Pit. Those who catch sight of you stare at you, wondering, Is this the man who made the earth shake and kingdoms quake, who turned the world into a wilderness, demolishing its cities, permitting not his captives to return home?” (Isaiah 14:15–17).