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Terror and Pit and Snare Await You, O People of the Earth

24: 16b-20

Terror and pit and snare await you, o people of the earth DIG: These verses return to the theme of judgment. What is the point of the dilemma that Isaiah presents here? Who is wasting away? Under whose treachery? How would you feel if you were under such persecution? What is happening here? When has something like this happened before? What effect does that have on you and those you love?

REFLECT: When have you tried getting “out of the frying pan” only to find yourself “in the fire?” What did you learn about yourself in that situation? Did that experience drive you toward God, or away from Him?

In contrast with the future joyful song of glory to **the God of Isra’el**, the distress of **Isaiah’s** own day caused **him** to pronounce **woe** on **himself**. **He** declared: **Woe to me!** All around **him** were **treacherous**, unfaithful people on whom judgment would fall in **the near historical future** in 687 BC by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. The phrase **the floodgates of the heavens are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake**, has similar language to the passages concerning the Noahic Flood (**Genesis 7:11** and **8:2**). This is why we should take the **everlasting covenant** of **24:5** to be the Noahic Covenant because of the context of the Noahic judgment. The judgment in the days of Noah and the judgment at the end of the Great Tribulation are different, because one is by water and one is by fire, but the totality of destruction around the world is similar.

But, I say, I’m wasting away, I am wasting away! Woe to me! It is as if **Isaiah** is saying, “I understand what is going to happen in the future, but what happens now?” **Dani’el** was similarly affected when **he** saw **his** visions into the future (**Dani’el 7:28, 8:27**). Fortunately for **Isaiah**, **he** had seen the ultimate victory at the end of the Great Tribulation; but unfortunately, **he** had also seen what would lead up to it. All **he** could see around **him** was treachery. The next five Hebrew words all come from the same root, *bgd*, which contains the idea of *plunder*

through deceit. **Traitors betray! Oh, how the traitors betray (24:16b CJB).** Because of the people's **treachery** and their other sins, **his** people would suffer.



But then **his** focus changes. **He** projects the destruction of Jerusalem in the days of **Jeremiah** into **the far eschatological future**. Again, with a pounding mantra, **Isaiah** drives home the fate of those who put their trust in **the world (First John 2:15-17)**. As if **he** could talk to them in the last days, **he** declared: **Terror and pit and snare await you, O people of the earth**. There is no reliability in the **people of the earth**, only **treachery**. As a result, they would know only terror, the terror of knowing that life is a series of traps from which there is no final escape. Here in a series of images, a strong, dependable earth is broken apart, staggering, and finally collapsing under the weight of its own sin. The earth will not be able to endure the **treachery** toward **each other** or toward **ADONAI. Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare (24:17-18). They would fall into a pit** used to capture animals or **be caught** by **snare** or trap. When **they** try to escape this future danger, **they** will be overcome by another disaster, the worldwide judgment of **God**. Here we see the imagery of **the frail hut of the watchman in a vineyard, which sways in the wind under the weight of its transgressions. Moral bankruptcy will bring about its collapse (Amos 5:2).**

At the end of the Great Tribulation we finally see the end of wickedness, which is the first of the three purposes of the Seventieth Week of **Dani'el** (see the commentary on **Revelation, to see link click Ch - The Beginning of the Great Tribulation**). During the Great Tribulation, **the floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth are broken up, the earth is split asunder and the earth is thoroughly shaken (24:18b-19)**. Notice the Oriental style of repetition for the purpose of emphasis. It literally means: *Broken, broken is*

the earth; shattered, shattered is the earth; shaken, shaken is the earth. In three Hebrew couplets of three words each repetition of sound, word and idea is used to make the thought triply emphatic. **John** makes a comparable point using similar imagery in **Revelation 12-15**.

Two more images of insecurity are used, the **drunkard (Psalm 107:27; Isaiah 29:9)**, and the **hut (1:8)**. **The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls - never to rise again (24:20)**. Like the **drunkard** staggering from bar to bar, or the temporary lean-to of twigs and leaves being blown apart by a strong **wind**, the destiny of **the earth** is clear: collapse. Who could believe what a drunk says, or trust a lean-to for protection? Obviously, no one! The first purpose, then, of the Great Tribulation is to make an end to wickedness and wicked ones. The imagery is one of a drunken man reeling. It is not a very pretty sight, but judgment for sin rarely is.