

Playing God



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Isaiah 13, Isa. 13:2–22, Isaiah 14, Isaiah 24–27.*

Memory Text: “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (*Isaiah 25:9, NKJV*).

After a minister had preached a searching sermon on pride, a woman who had heard the sermon waited for him and told him that she was in much distress of mind, and that she would like to confess a great sin. The minister asked her what the sin was.

“She answered, ‘The sin of pride, for I sat for an hour before my mirror some days ago admiring my beauty.’

“‘Oh,’ responded the minister, ‘that was not a sin of pride—that was a sin of imagination!’”—C. E. Macartney, compiled by Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*, p. 1100.

Ever since sin was born in the heart of a mighty angel, pride has not respected the boundaries of reality (in angels or people). Nowhere is this problem seen worse than in those who harbor spiritual pride, a rather sorry trait in beings so corrupted that their salvation can be found only in the works of another in their behalf.

This week, among other things, we’ll take a look at the origin of pride and self-exaltation.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 6.

Doom on the Nations *(Isaiah 13)*

Isaiah 13:1 has a heading that names Isaiah as the author (*compare Isa. 1:1, Isa. 2:1*); it seems, also, to begin a new section of his book. Chapters 13–23 contain oracles of judgment against various nations. Let's take a look.

Why do the prophecies against the nations begin with Babylon?

Isaiah 10:5–34 already had announced judgment against Assyria, which posed the greatest danger in Isaiah's day. While Isaiah 14:24–27 briefly reiterates the Lord's plan to break Assyria, chapters 13–23 deal mainly with other threats, Babylon being the most important.

Endowed with a rich and ancient cultural, religious, and political legacy, Babylon later emerged as the superpower that conquered and exiled Judah. But from the human perspective of Isaiah's time, it would not have been readily apparent that Babylon would threaten God's people. During much of Isaiah's ministry, Assyria dominated Babylon. From 728 B.C., when Tiglath-pileser III took Babylon and was proclaimed king of Babylon under the throne name Pulu (*or Pul; see 2 Kings 15:19, 1 Chron. 5:26*), Assyrian kings retook Babylon several times (710 B.C., 702 B.C., 689 B.C., and 648 B.C.). Babylon, however, eventually would become the great superpower in the region, the power that would destroy the Judean kingdom.

Read through Isaiah 13. Notice how strong the language is. Why does a loving God do these things, or allow these things to happen? Certainly some innocent people will suffer, as well, wouldn't they? (*Isa. 13:16.*) How do we understand this action by God? What should these texts, and all the texts in the Bible that talk about God's anger and wrath against sin and evil, tell us about the egregious nature of sin and evil? Isn't the mere fact that a God of love would respond this way enough evidence to show us just how bad sin is? We have to remember that this is Jesus speaking these warnings through Isaiah, the same Jesus who forgave, healed, pleaded with, and admonished sinners to repent. In your own mind, how have you come to understand this aspect of a loving God's character? Ask yourself this question, as well: Could not this wrath actually stem from His love? If so, how so? Or, look at it from another perspective, that of the Cross, where Jesus Himself, bearing the sins of the world, suffered worse than anyone else ever has suffered, even those "innocents" who suffered because of the sins of the nation. How does the suffering of Christ on the cross help answer these difficult questions?

The Late Great City of Babylon *(Isa. 13:2–22)*

In 626 B.C. the Chaldaean Nabopolassar restored Babylonian glory by making himself king in Babylon, beginning the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, and participating (with Media) in the defeat of Assyria. His son, Nebuchadnezzar II, was the king who conquered and exiled Judah.

How did the city of Babylon finally end? *(See Daniel 5.)*

In 539 B.C., when Cyrus the Persian captured Babylon for the Medo-Persian Empire *(see Daniel 5)*, the city lost its independence forever. In 482 B.C., Xerxes I brutally suppressed a revolt of Babylon against Persian rule. He removed the statue of Marduk, the chief god, and apparently damaged some fortifications and temples.

Alexander the Great took Babylon from the Persians in 331 B.C. without a fight. In spite of his short-lived dream to make Babylon his eastern capital, the city declined over several centuries. By A.D. 198 the Roman, Septimus Severus, found Babylon completely deserted. So, the great city came to an end through abandonment. Today some Iraqi villagers live on parts of the ancient site, but they have not rebuilt the city as such.

The doom of Babylon, described in Isaiah 13, liberates the descendants of Jacob, who have been oppressed by Babylon *(Isa. 14:1–3)*. The event that accomplished this was the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 B.C. Although he did not destroy the city, this was the beginning of the end for Babylon, and it never threatened God’s people again.

Isaiah 13 dramatizes the fall of Babylon as a divine judgment. The warriors who take the city are God’s agents *(Isa. 13:2–5)*. The time of judgment is called “the day of the LORD” *(Isa. 13:6, 9)*, and God’s anger is so powerful it affects the stars, sun, moon, heavens, and earth *(Isa. 13:10, 13)*.

Compare Judges 5, where the song of Deborah and Barak describes the Lord as going forth with quaking of the earth and with rain from the heavens *(Judg. 5:4)*. Judges 5:20, 21 depicts the elements of nature, including stars, as fighting against the foreign oppressor.

Imagine that someone living in Babylon at the height of its glory might read these words of Isaiah 13, particularly Isaiah 13:19–22. How foolish and impossible they would have seemed! What other prophecies, yet unfulfilled, seem foolish and impossible to us now? Why would we be foolish, however, to dismiss them as impossible?

Fall of the Mountain “King” (Isaiah 14)

In response to the fall of Babylon (*Isaiah 13*), which frees God’s people (*Isa. 14:1–3*), Isaiah 14:4–23 utters a figurative taunt (*see also Mic. 2:4, Hab. 2:6*) against the king of Babylon. It is poetic, not meant to be literal, obviously, as it portrays dead kings greeting their new colleague in the realm of death (*Isa. 14:9, 10*), where maggots and worms are his bedding (*Isa. 14:11*). This is simply the Lord’s dramatic way of telling the haughty king that he shall be brought low, as other proud monarchs before him—it is not a commentary on the state of the dead!

How could Isaiah 14:12–14 apply to a king of Babylon?

Babylonian kings did not suffer from lack of self-esteem (*Daniel 4, 5*). But aspiring to “be like the most High” (*Isa. 14:14*) would be beyond even the most inflated ego. While kings claimed strong connections with the gods, they were subservient to them. This was dramatically demonstrated every year on the fifth day of the Babylonian New Year Festival, in which the king was required to remove his royal insignia before approaching the statue of Marduk so his kingship could be reaffirmed. The idea of displacing even a lesser god would have been looked upon as crazy and suicidal.

As in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28 identifies heaven-daring arrogance with the ruler of a city. Here also, the description goes beyond that of an earthly monarch, and God’s crosshairs come into sharper focus: the proud potentate was in the Garden of Eden, an anointed, covering, or guardian cherub on God’s holy mountain, perfect from the day he was created until sin was found in him, cast out by God, and will eventually be destroyed with fire (*Ezek. 28:12–18*). Applied to any human being, the specific terms of this rhetoric are so figurative as to be meaningless. But Revelation 12:7–9 does tell of a mighty being who was cast out of heaven with his angels: “Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (*Rev. 12:9, NRSV*), who deceived Eve in Eden (*Genesis 3*).

Satan has a proud imagination: “You have said, ‘I am a god; I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,’ yet you are but a mortal, and no god” (*Ezek. 28:2, NRSV*). The manner of his death will prove he is no god. Unlike Christ, Satan will perish in the heart of a sea of fire (*Rev. 20:10*), never to haunt the universe again.

Compare Isaiah 14:13, 14 with Matthew 11:29, John 13:5, and Philippians 2:5–8. What does this contrast tell us about the character of God as opposed to the character of Satan? What does this contrast tell us about how the Lord views pride, arrogance, and the desire for self-supremacy?

Heaven's Gate *(Isaiah 13, 14)*

In Isaiah 14 a taunt against Satan, the fallen “Day Star [in *KJV*, “*Lucifer*”], son of Dawn” (*Isa. 14:12, NRSV*) is blended into a taunt against the king of Babylon. Why? Compare Revelation 12:1–9, where a dragon identified as Satan (*Rev. 12:9*) tries to destroy a child as soon as it is born. In Revelation 12:5 the child clearly is Christ. But it was King Herod who tried to kill Jesus as a young child (*Matthew 2*). The dragon is both Satan and the Roman power represented by Herod, because Satan works through human agents. Similarly, Satan was the power behind the king of Babylon and the prince of Tyre.

Why does “Babylon” later refer to Rome (*1 Pet. 5:13*) and to an evil power in the book of Revelation (*Rev. 14:8; Rev. 16:19; Rev. 17:5; Rev. 18:2, 10, 21*)?

Like literal Babylon, Rome and the “Babylon” of Revelation are proud, ruthless powers that oppress God’s people. See especially Revelation 17:6, for it is “drunk with the blood of the saints” (*NRSV*). They rebel against God, an idea implied in the name “Babylon” itself. In the Babylonian language, the name is *bab ili*, which means: “the gate of god(s),” referring to the place of access to the divine realm. Compare Genesis 11, where people built the tower of Babel (Babylon) so that by their own power they could rise to the divine level of immunity from any accountability to God.

When Jacob awoke from a dream in which he saw a ladder connecting heaven and earth, he exclaimed: “This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (*Gen. 28:17, NRSV*). Notice that the “house of God” is “the gate of heaven”; that is, the way of access to the divine realm. Jacob named the place “Bethel,” which means “house of God.”

The “gate of heaven” at Bethel and the “gate of god(s)” at Babylon were opposite ways to reach the divine realm. Jacob’s ladder originated in heaven, revealed from above by God. But Babylon, with its towers and ziggurat temples, was built by human beings from the ground up. These opposite ways represent contrasting paths to salvation: divinely initiated grace versus human works. All true religion is based on the humble Bethel model: “For by grace you have been saved through faith” (*Eph. 2:8, 9, NRSV*). All false “religion,” including legalism and “secular” humanism, is based on the proud Babylon model. For the contrast between the two approaches, see Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the publican (*Luke 18:9–14*).

Even after spending a few years in a Zen monastery, Canadian songwriter Leonard Cohen told an interviewer, “I’m not saved.” In the context of today’s study, what do you think his problem was? What did he need to know about salvation?

Final Triumph of Zion *(Isaiah 24–27)*

Following oracles against individual nations in Isaiah 13–23, Isaiah 24–27 describes on a worldwide scale the climactic defeat of God’s enemies and the deliverance of His people.

Why does Isaiah’s description of the desolation of the earth *(Isaiah 24)* look like John’s description of events connected with 1,000 years that follow Christ’s second coming *(Revelation 20)*?

As in Isaiah 13 and 14, aspects of literal Babylon apply to later powers, and the “king of Babylon” represents fusion of human rulers with the mastermind behind them, Satan himself. So, a message that Babylon is fallen *(Isa. 21:9)* can be repeated at a later time *(Rev. 14:8, Rev. 18:2)*, and Satan is finally destroyed after the millennium *(Rev. 20:10)*. While the destruction of literal Babylon was a judgment “day of the LORD” *(Isa. 13:6, 9)*, another “great and terrible day of the LORD” *(Joel 2:31, Mal. 4:5, compare Zeph. 1:7)* is on the way.

Similarly, in Isaiah 24 the prophet’s vision reaches through conditions with which he is familiar to the time when “the moon will be abashed, and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem” *(Isa. 24:23, NRSV)*. Isaiah undoubtedly thought the vision applied to the Jerusalem he knew, but the book of Revelation explains that it will actually be fulfilled in the New Jerusalem *(Rev. 21:2)*. “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb” *(Rev. 21:23, NRSV)*.

Does God really destroy the wicked?

Look at Isaiah 28:21, where God’s work of destruction is His strange “deed” *(NRSV)*. *It is* strange for Him, because He doesn’t want to do it, but it is, nevertheless, a deed, or an act. It is true that sin carries the seeds of self-destruction *(James 1:15)*. But because God has ultimate power over life and death, and He determines the time, place, and manner of final destruction *(Revelation 20)*, it is pointless to argue that He ultimately terminates the curse of sin in a passive way, by simply allowing cause and effect to take its natural course.

What we see in Isaiah 24–27 is what we see reflected in the entire Bible, which is that no matter the suffering, pain, and desolation now, in the end God and goodness will triumph over evil. What, then, is the only thing we can do if we ourselves want to be part of that final victory? *(Prov. 3:5–7, Rom. 10:9.)*

Further Thought: “Is it by conditions that we receive salvation?— Never by conditions that we come to Christ. And if we come to Christ, then what is the condition? The condition is that by living faith we lay hold wholly and entirely upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. When we do that, then we work the works of righteousness. But when God is calling the sinner in our world, and inviting him, there is no condition there; he draws by the invitation of Christ, and it is not, Now you have got to respond in order to come to God. The sinner comes, and as he comes and views Christ elevated upon that cross of Calvary, which God impresses upon his mind, there is a love beyond anything that is imagined that he has taken hold of.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 32.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Look at the above quote from Ellen G. White; read it in the context of Wednesday’s study. What is she telling us there? Notice in her statement both elements of the Christian walk: faith and then works. How does she differentiate between them?
- 2 Why are pride and arrogance such dangerous sins? Why are they so hard to put away? Can it be because by their very nature they blind people to their need to put them away? After all, if you are proud, you think you are OK, and if you think you are OK, why bother changing? How can dwelling on the Cross and what it represents (the only means of saving any person) be a powerful cure for pride and arrogance in anyone?
- 3 Does Isaiah see hope for people of other nations? (See, for example, *Isa. 25:3, 6* and *Isa. 26:9*. Compare *Rev. 19:9*.)

Summary: Isaiah saw that following Assyria, Babylon would conquer Judah. But he also saw that in spite of superhuman rulers of the darkness of this world (*Eph. 6:12*) working through God’s human enemies and presuming to play God, the Lord would decisively prevail and bring eternal peace to our troubled planet.

Missing Commandment

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY, Adventist Mission

Valentina Shlee was astounded when her older sister, Galina, announced that they were not keeping all of the Ten Commandments in their hometown in northern Kazakhstan.

Valentina opened her Bible and read through the commandments. When she reached the fourth, she stopped.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” she read in Exodus 20:8–11. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (NKJV).

She and Galina resolved to find a church that observed the seventh-day Sabbath. But where should they look? “Let’s do it like this,” Valentina told Galina. “If the Bible is really the true Word of God, there must be a church that follows all ten commandments. Let’s pray about it.”

The sisters prayed for three months. “If there is a church that keeps all the commandments, please lead us to it,” Valentina prayed.

One day, Valentina felt an irresistible urge to visit Nelly, a relative. She didn’t know what came over her. Usually she stayed at home all day with her two-year-old son. At Nelly’s house, Valentina and Nelly were talking when another relative, Olga, rang the doorbell. Olga was not a close relative. In fact, Valentina had heard that she had joined a dangerous sect called the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the house, Olga didn’t mince words.

“What do you think about God?” she asked Valentina.

Valentina ignored the question and asked one of her own.

“Do you keep all the commandments?” she said. “Do you keep the seventh-day Sabbath?”



Hours later Valentina informed Galina that the Seventh-day Adventist Church observes all ten commandments. Several months later, the sisters were baptized together.

“Through the Holy Word, God led us to the church that keeps all ten commandments,” Valentina said.

Part of a 2017 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped open one of the first Seventh-day Adventist preschools in Valentina’s hometown, Pavlodar, Kazakhstan.

Study Focus: *Isaiah 13, 14, 24–27****Part I: Overview***

Isaiah 13 and 14 explore the idea of judgment, including the motif of the day of the Lord. Judgment is a divine initiative that could bring the announcement of an era of distress or the beginning of a new age of joyful experience. The judgment could come over a foreign nation (as occurs in Isaiah 13, 14), or it could come to God’s people. Isaiah 24 tells us that the judgment of the Lord has universal application. Isaiah 25 and 26 are part of a song that announces restoration for Judah, but also includes eschatological significance for the redeemed at the end of the time.

Chapter 25 has been divided into three sections: (1) praise to God for the victory (verses 1–5), (2) a feast for God’s people (verses 6–8), and (3) the victory of the Lord over enemies (verses 9–12). Isaiah 26 deals with the characteristics of the redeemed now that they are a faithful nation (instead of a sinful nation, as in chapter 1); and they remain faithful, among other characteristics.

Three main topics are explored in this study: (1) God’s judgments, (2) the assurance of victory, and (3) the faithful nation.

Part II: Commentary

God’s Judgments

The idea of judgment is a recurrent theme in the prophetic literature of the Bible. Judgment could bring the end of an era of distress and the beginning of a new age of joyful experience (*Isa. 42:1*). Or it could bring, or announce, future destruction, as occurs in the prophecies of Isaiah 13, 14, and the following chapters. Those days of judgment sometimes are announced by using the expression “the day of the LORD,” as is evident in the first half of the book of Isaiah.

The day of the Lord may be a day of restoration: “It shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (*Isa. 22:20–22*).

However, the day of the Lord could be a day of destruction, as occurs in Isaiah 13 and 14, which refer to the devastation of Babylon and Assyria. The judgment (including the reference to “the day”) could have negative implications for Judah (*Isa. 2:12; Isa. 3:13, 14, 18*), as well, but that feature is more commonly seen in the judgment against foreign nations.

Judgment comes by God’s initiative: “I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger” (*Isa. 13:3*). It is not standard in the Hebrew language to start a sentence with a subject but, rather, with the verb; however, the exception happens in this verse. The “I” is emphasized here. On the other hand, it is a notable attribute of God as sovereign over the earthly powers. It is emphasized in Isaiah 14 as well: “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand” (*Isa. 14:24*). On the other hand, referring to “The mighty God” in Isaiah 9:6, the author uses in Isaiah 13:3 the word *gibbwōr* (mighty), referring to *His mighty ones*. They are “the weapons of his indignation” (*Isa. 13:5*).

Another important element of judgment is imminence. For instance, “for the day of the LORD is at hand” (*Isa. 13:6*) or “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh” (*Isa. 13:9*). An image of a host ready for a battle is described here: “The LORD of hosts is mustering the army for battle” (*Isa. 13:4, NASB*). It would be a day of wrath. The Lord says, “I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger” (*Isa. 13:3*), “the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger” (*Isa. 13:9*), “and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger” (*Isa. 13:13*).

Another notable element of the Lord’s judgment is the reason for a final reckoning and day of destruction: “And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (*Isa. 13:11*). All of these sins are embodied in literal and spiritual Babylon.

The Assurance of Victory

Although the prophecies of Isaiah 13 and 14 focus on Babylon and Assyria at the end of chapter 14, the whole earth is included: “This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations” (*Isa. 14:26*). There is no doubt that the eschatological implications of Isaianic prophecies include the entire universe. This notion is also developed in Isaiah 24: “The LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it” (*Isa. 24:1, NIV*). Therefore, “a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty” (*Isa. 24:6, NASB*), “for its transgression is heavy upon it” (*Isa. 24:20, NASB*). It is clear that the issue is not against the earth as an element of the creation but against the transgression upon it. The good news, in the end, is that “the LORD of hosts shall reign” (*Isa. 24:23*).

Isaiah 25 is a song of praise for God's favor in the eschatological day of the Lord. The chapter has three clear sections. These are 1–5, 6–8, and 9–12. The first part is the song of praise for what God has done for His people after prolonged pain and suffering. God has completed what He has planned for His people: “for You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness” (*Isa. 25:1, NASB*). He has overthrown the powers of the oppressors of His people. He has made “a fortified city into a ruin” (*Isa. 25:2, NASB*). Thus, this praise is a sign of joy and happiness for the victory. God is exalted through the works that He has done.

The second part of this chapter encompasses verses 6–8. The content emphasizes the celebration of God's people. The Lord has restored the joy and peace in their land. God has removed the time of dark suffering from their lives. God has buried their pain and tears. It is now time for a feast, for “on this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines” (*Isa. 25:6, NRSV*). Sorrow is eternally banished: “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces” (*Isa. 25:8*).

The last section of this chapter begins in verse 9 and ends in verse 12. This section elaborates upon the song of God in the first section. The section praises God for His anticipated performance: “this is our God; . . . he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him” (*Isa. 25:9*) and “the unassailable fortifications of your walls He will bring down” (*Isa. 25:12, NASB*). Thus, God's people “will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest” (*Isa. 25:9, 10*).

The Faithful Nation

The song in Isaiah 26 complements the song of the previous chapter. Particularly, verses 1 to 10 emphasize an important topic in relation to the redeemed (applying it, first and foremost, to the nation of Judah that returns to its homeland from the deportation in Babylon). The topic of this section is faithfulness. The question is, “Who is able to enter into the gates and to participate in the banquet?”

The song describes the city as a protected city. Now, the order comes: “open the gates,” so “that the righteous nation may enter, the one that remains faithful” (*Isa. 26:2, NASB*). The nation is no longer a sinful nation (chapter 1) but a righteous one. The Hebrew expression used for righteous is *šaddiq*, and according to the Hebrew lexicon, it denotes several things: (1) the upright person, behaving correctly and coping with his life; (2) the pious person, one belonging to the community of Yahweh; (3) the pious person who has his or her pleasure in the commandments; and (4) the one who is regarded as just, correct. In short, *šaddiq* describes someone who is just, upright, and devout (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The*

Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol. 3, p. 1002).

Additionally, these verses in Isaiah 26 provide more details about the features of the redeemed and also complement the previous line of thought: the faithful one “remains faithful” (*Isa. 26:2, NASB*) or, as is translated in the New International Version, “keeps faith.” Another characteristic of the redeemed is that they trust in the Lord, which is emphasized twice in Isaiah 26:3, 4: “They trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever” (*NRSV*).

Isaiah 26:7 introduces a new word (an adjective in this case) in order to describe the redeemed. It is the Hebrew expression *yāšār*, which describes a “right or just (person).”—Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 450. Isaiah 26:7 says, “The way of the righteous is smooth; O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level” (*NASB*). Isaiah 26:8, 9 provides other elements in the experience of that faithful people who are going to enter into the redeemed city: “In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and your renown are the soul’s desire. My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you” (*Isa. 26:8, 9; NRSV*).

Part III: Life Application

- 1. The scene of judgment seems to be largely terrifying and horrifying for many. But oftentimes, the fear of impending judgment impels people to seek the Lord and finally to enter into the way of salvation. What lesson can we learn from the scenes of the judgment in the book of Isaiah? Read Isaiah 24, especially, in the formulation of your answer.**

2. In Isaiah 25, God has shown in advance His faithfulness for the deliverance of His people from the oppression of the enemies. He will overthrow them with His mighty power. God is going to give peace and joy to His people. He has secured victory in the past, and He will bring us victory in the future. God is our victory, and we can have victory over suffering, pain, and sin by the power of the mighty God. What hope does this thought give us as we look to the day of the great eschatological feast that God has prepared for His beloved people?

3. Isaiah 26 provides some of the characteristics of the people who are going to enter the gates of the secured city. “The righteous nation” and those who keep faith “may enter in” (*Isa. 26:2, NRSV*). With these verses in mind, how would you describe your experience of faith lately?
