

# The City of Formlessness and the Decreation of the World – *Isaiah 24*

**Introduction** – What are the foundations of creation? Materialists define the created world and its elements in terms of molecules and such. But the Scriptures teach us that created things are not founded upon created things, but rather upon the Word of God. The foundations of creation are based upon God's covenants with creation. It all exists because “*God said*,” creation continues according to God's active providence, and creation was upended when Jesus said, “*It is finished*.”

**Overview** – The LORD declares a terrible judgment upon the land, a fourfold decreation (v1). It affects all classes of people from all three spheres of relationships (sanctuary, household, land-economic, v2). The land is utterly plundered because the LORD has spoken (v3). The land mourns and even the whole world fades away (v4). The destruction is total, just as the curse had warned (vv5-6, cf. Deut 28:15ff). There is no more wine of joy and so there is no more rejoicing (vv7-9). Jerusalem becomes a formless, broken down city, shut up and silent (vv10-12). The harvest of judgment complete, the picture turns to a time of a gleaner a remnant (v13). This remnant however is from all over the earth (vv14-16a), but Isaiah notes that he and his people are ruined (v16b). Those who try to flee will fall into a pit, and those who escape will fall into a snare (vv17-18a). Heaven's windows break open and the land/earth will be split open, totter around like a drunk, and then fall (vv18b – 20). Stars of heaven and kings of earth are both rulers appointed by God and so He uses the falling of the universe to picture the fall of kings and their kingdoms (vv21-22). They will lie in shame as it becomes clear that the LORD of hosts rules the nations now from His throne in Jerusalem where His glory outshines them all before the elders of the New Israel (v23).

**Location: Earth/Land** – “*Erets*” occurs in the OT over 2500 times and is translated “land,” “earth,” “country,” or “ground” in descending order. Is the context here the entire world, the land of Judah, or something else? Chapters 24-27 are the culmination of the burdens pronounced upon the many nations of chapters 13-23 and so many consider this an apocalypse of the entire world at the end of time. Remember, however, that the purpose of the burdens being declared is as a lesson to Judah. Jerusalem is going to be judged; Judah is going to fall. And when that happens, because of who Judah is, the whole world is going to be turned upside down (which is what of course was said of the disciples in Acts 17:6). It seems best to deem most of the uses of this term in Chapter 24 as referring to the “land” of Judah, Jerusalem in particular. But “in that day” in verse 23, the effect was to be upon the kings of the earth, Jew and Gentile alike, because of their conspiracy against the LORD's anointed (Psalm 2, Acts 4:27-28).

**A House Left Desolate** (Matt 23:37-39) – Jesus told Jerusalem that this desolation and decreation would occur in that generation (Matt 24:34) using the same kind of cosmos-crashing imagery (Matt 24:29). This would occur because Israel had “transgressed the laws,” (Isaiah 24:5, literally, “*walked over*,” which is what Jesus charged Israel with in Matt 23:4, 13, 23). Before that generation ended, Jerusalem was left desolate and silent, emptied of all glory, life and joy. The city which was the covenantal center of the universe, had been decreed; it was formless and void (Isaiah 24:10, Gen 1:2).

**A Song of the Remnant** – During that generation, however, a remnant of nations was brought forth in the harvest of a New Jerusalem. The day of Pentecost saw three thousand souls saved, speaking the tongues of many nations (Acts 2, Isaiah 24:14f). The lump had been leavened, and the spread of the kingdom of God began and continues. This song is picked up again in chapters 25-26. But for those who remained in old Jerusalem in 70AD, Roman soldiers closed off all hope of escape and crucified or killed whoever tried, just as Isaiah 24:17f seem to hint.

**Romans 11** – Look and see how the same flow of argument is used by Paul in his present day as he discusses the impending judgment upon the unbelieving Jews. All of Israel seemed to have fallen away, but just as in Elijah's day, a small remnant had been saved (vv1-7). But for the rest, they had been blinded and led into a trap because of their unfaithfulness (vv8-10). This would be used by God to bring the Gentiles to faith, which would in turn provoke Israel to jealousy in due time (vv11-15). Unbelieving Israel had been cut out of the covenant-tree of God while the wild olive shoots of the Gentiles had been grafted in (vv16-22). But that is not the end of the story: Israel will one day be re-grafted in and saved (vv23-27). Now the main reason I bring this up is that this follows the *exact same pattern and flow* of Isaiah 24-27. Isaiah is not pointing to the end of the world in our future, but the destruction of the old covenant administration and a new world, a new order, a new humanity, through Jesus Christ.

**Creation Redone** – This is the story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the nations and it is the story of every man and woman who is found in Christ. In Christ, you have died and have been brought to a new life (Gal 2:20, 2 Cor 5:17). You were once under the curse of the transgression of the first Adam, but you have been made righteous in the second Adam (Rom 5:12-21) where grace abounds much more. The singing of this New Song to the Lord, the right worship of the Father through Jesus Christ, this is the proclamation to the world of the judgment/salvation, the decreation/recreation, of the world. We come here to partake and we go out there to live out.