

## Isaiah 26, Concluding Cantata: Judah's Song

### Overview

Isaiah presents the second of the three songs that amplify the distant echo that he heard in the vision of judgment in ch. 24 (24:14-16a). This chapter is explicitly “Judah's Song” (v. 1).

The structure of this chapter depends crucially on the pronouns.

- Through v. 19, sections addressing the people as 2pl (vv. 1-2, 4-6, 19b) alternate with those addressing God as 2s (3, 7-19a, 19c). So we can distinguish exhortation (horizontal, among the believers) from prayer (vertical, to God). Each of the 2pl sections contains a command.
- The sections in which the people address one another use 2pl entirely. This difference marks off 26:20-27:1, which uses 2s, as a separate section. As in ch. 25, it is an expectation that follows the song.
- The first person pronouns<sup>1</sup> in 7-19 alternate with 3pl pronouns. Here the contrast appears to be between Israel and the Gentile nations.

### 26:1-21, The People's Song and Expectation

The Song and the Expectation deal with two different aspects of God's judgment. In vv. 1-19, we learn of how God's judgments even upon believers can teach us righteousness. In the Expectation, the focus is on the final judgment, and believers are explicitly excluded.

#### 1-19, Song

**26:1 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah;**--The songs of 24:14-16a were heard afar off, but now the time of chastisement is over, and Judah itself echos with song.

#### 1-2, Exhortation

The people rejoice in their citizenship in the city of God, and Isaiah replies with an invitation to enter.

**We have a strong city;**--The “mountain” mentioned twice in ch. 25 drew our attention back to Jerusalem. The judgment of ch. 24 focused on the collapse of the city of man (24:10-12), but now Isaiah shows us another city, whose strength is uncompromised.

**salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.**--The defenses of this city do not consist of great stones and broad moats, but of God's salvation.

**2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.**--The address, as throughout the exhortations, is to the people. They are given the criterion for those who are to be admitted to the protection of the city: a righteous, obedient life.

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<sup>1</sup> Within vv. 7-19, the speaker is mostly 1pl, but sometimes (9, 19) 1s). This may be Isaiah, or a representative voice individualizing the sentiments of the population as a whole, but does not appear to be of structural significance.

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As often in Isaiah, the picture is a metaphor, whose explanation follows.

### 3, Prayer

**3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,**--Now the people turn to the Lord and acknowledge the security that he provides. But note how the qualification for enjoying the defense changes.

**whose mind is stayed on thee:**--Literally, “a fixed imagination.” The OT regularly condemns man's imaginations, but when they are fixed, grounded on the Lord and his word, they lead to peace and blessing. Our thoughts need to be anchored in the Lord.

**because he trusteth in thee.**--To the gatekeepers of v. 2, the qualification was righteous conduct. To God, it is faith and trust.

This difference corresponds to an important contrast in the NT. Is justification by faith or by works?

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith** without the deeds of the law.

Rom 4:2-3 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Jam 2:21 Was not Abraham our father **justified by works**, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

The NT teaches that justification is by faith **and** by works, depending on who is judging.

- God **will not** credit our works; “before God” (the condition in Rom 4:2) it is only of faith, and Isa 26:3 reflects this perspective.
- We cannot see the faith of another; before men, like the gatekeepers of Isa 26:2, it is only of works.

### 4-6, Exhortation

The song returns to exhortation, perhaps addressed to “the righteous nation” invited into the city in v. 2.

Here and in the following prayer, note the repeated contrast between the experience of the people of God and those who reject him.

**4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever:**--The invitation of v. 2 is now rephrased in the language of v. 3.

How does one enter into the strong city? By trusting in the Lord. The singers give two reasons for this trust, each introduced by “for.”

**for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:**--The first motive for our trust is that the Lord protects those who do so trust in him. He is the strong city; cf. Pro 18:10,

The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

He is able to defend us from those who would threaten us.

**5 For he bringeth down them that dwell on high;**--The second motive for our trust is that he will humble those who do **not** trust in him.

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We are back to the fundamental promise of 2:11-12,

Isa 2:11-12 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought low:

The proud trust in their physical resources, their money, their fortifications. God will bring them down, and only those who trust in him will be secure.

**the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust.**--He not only drags the defenders out of the cities, but flattens the cities themselves.

**6 The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.**--In an ultimate show of humiliation, the Lord causes those who were abused to tread on the ruins of man's citadel.

### 7-19a, Prayer

This paragraph appears to fall into two parts, both dealing with the impact of God's judgments on his people (Jew and Gentile). vv. 7-12 focuses on the mechanism by which his judgments produce the righteousness required to enter the strong city, while 13-19 give three examples of this process.

#### 7-12, *The Mechanism of Righteous Through Judgment*

In the early echo of singing that Isaiah heard in 24:14-16a, one of the anthems was, "Glory to the Righteous" (v. 16). The parallelism there led us to understand the term "the Righteous One" (singular) as referring to the Lord. Yet in this chapter (v. 2), Isaiah anticipates that there will be a "righteous nation," and v. 7 begins with a reference to "the just," literally, "the righteous one" (the same expression as in 24:16). vv. 7-12 describe how people can come to be called "righteous."<sup>2</sup>

The section begins and ends with a general statement giving credit to the Lord for the process by which men come to exhibit practical righteousness (vv. 7, 12). In between, he discusses the application of this process first to Israel, then to the Gentiles.

### 7, General Principle

**7 The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh [make level] the path of the just.**--The verb rendered "weigh," when used elsewhere with a path, can also mean "make smooth, level." That sense fits best here. The point is not that God evaluates our independent righteousness. Isaiah himself knows that our own righteousness is nothing but filthy rags (64:6). Rather God smooths out our path, removing stumbling blocks, so that we can conduct ourselves in righteousness. He does what we request in the prayer our Lord taught us (Matt 6:13), "Lead us not into temptation."

### 8-9a, Application to Israel

**8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee;**--Here is a paradox! He has

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah's concern here is with practical righteousness, not the imputed righteousness of God (Rom 4).

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just credited God with making their path smooth, but now he calls that same path “the way of thy judgments.” How can a path full of judgment be described as “smooth,” and lead to righteousness?

**the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.**--Here is the answer: because it takes our attention off of ourselves and our comfort, and puts it on the Lord.

Psa 119:71 *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

Jam 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Not everyone will respond in this way to God's judgments, only those described in v. 3, whose imagination is grounded in the Lord and who trust in him. Thus Isaiah shows us how the attitude of trust in v. 3 leads to the righteousness of v. 2.

Isaiah devotes the next three verses to developing this fundamental principle, that God develops righteousness in us by testing us. In 9a, he shifts from 1p to 1s pronouns, personalizing the principle (as every believer must do). Then, in 9b-11, he broadens it out beyond Judah to include the Gentiles.

**9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early:**--Judgment focuses us completely on the Lord. It forces us to call on him and draw near to him, and that closeness brings uprightness in our lives.

### 9b-11, Application to Gentiles

Now he turns his attention from the people of God to the unbelievers. Have the Jews “waited ... in the way of [God's] judgments”? The Gentiles learn of him in the same way.

**for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.**--It is not just the Jews, but all the “inhabitants of the world,” who must learn righteousness in the school of suffering. We have numerous examples of this principle in Scripture:

**Pharaoh:** Exo 9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. [cf. 12:32, where after the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh sends them off to sacrifice, and says, “bless me also”].

**The Philistines:** 1Sa 5:6-7 But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. 7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

**The Rich Man:** Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

9b introduces a chiasm. It begins and ends describing how unbelievers learn and see, and in the middle describes other circumstances under which they do not learn and do not see.

**10 Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness:**--Note the double shift: from “judgment” to “favor,” and from “learn” to “not learn.” Why must God use judgment to teach us? Because favor and prosperity do not lead to righteousness! Agur knew this:

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Pro 30:7-9 Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die: 8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9 **Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD?** or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

When we are comfortable, it is all too easy to trust in our prosperity. Under favor, we do not learn. But under judgment, we will learn (9b).

**in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.**--“Majesty” here is related to the word in 24:14 that we translated “arrogant pride.” When God withholds his sovereign judgments, people think that they are in control, and do not submit to him.

**11 LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see:**--This clause is parallel to the previous one. To do something with the hand lifted up is to act openly, defiantly, as when Israel left Egypt (Exod 14:2; Num 33:3). When Num 15:30 speaks of sinning “presumptuously,” the expression is, “with a high hand,” as when an athlete raises his hand in boastful victory. God's actions with a high hand are his majesty, but they will not see, they will not behold.

**but they shall see,**--We come now to the close of the chiasm. Isaiah has finished talking about the times of favor and prosperity when the wicked do not see the Lord's obvious actions. Now “they shall see.” What opens their eyes? Isaiah describes two things:

**and be ashamed for their envy at the people;**--First, they see God's favor<sup>3</sup> on those whom they have oppressed. The sentiment here is that expressed by David in Ps 86,

Psa 86:17 Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

**yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.**--Second, they feel God's fierce wrath against themselves.

## 12, General Principle

**12 LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us:**--Isaiah now brings us back to v. 3, the promise of perfect peace to those who trust in the Lord. It is the peace of those who live in the strong city (v. 1). Only the righteous may enter there (v. 2). But they may not boast of their qualifications:

**for thou also hast wrought all our works in [for] us.**--This clause summarizes the insight that the righteous can claim no credit for their righteousness. It is God who prepares their path before them (v. 7), who teaches them righteousness by his judgments (v. 9). He creates in us the righteousness that grants us access to the peace and security of his city.

## 13-19a, Examples of Righteousness Through Judgment

Now Isaiah gives three examples of how the Lord's judgments have actually led to their deliverance. The first and last concern Israel, while the central one concerns the Gentiles. Thus this section unfolds

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<sup>3</sup> This interpretation is invariant under the ambiguity that attaches to קנאת-עם. Whether it describes the zeal of God for his people that brings the blessing that the wicked see, or the jealousy of the wicked themselves for that blessing, the point is that they envy the protection of the righteous.

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the Jew-Gentile sequence from vv. 8-11.

### 13-14, Israel Delivered from Idolatry

**13 O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us:**--Literally, “were our husbands” (בעליונו), related to the name for the most common false gods whom Israel served (the Baals בעלים). This idolatry was the main cause for the captivities. They submitted themselves to “other lords” in the land, so he placed them under the full “dominion” of such gods. This clause is thus both a confession of their sin and a recognition of the judgment.

**but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.**--This clause makes two claims.

1. The nation (“we”) now worships the Lord, not the idols.
2. This change is due to the Lord's intervention (“by thee only”).

**14 They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.**--These ancient gods will never more be worshiped. God has not only destroyed them, but caused his people to forget them. The experience of the Babylonian captivity put an end to Israel's idolatry. However else they may sin, they have never returned to idols.

### 15-16, Gentiles Added to the Nation

**15 Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.**--For their worship of false gods, the nation was destroyed. Now that they have turned from them, it will be increased, both numerically and spatially. The last clause describes, not the exile of Israel (note that “it” is in italics), but rather its expansion throughout all the earth. God pushes back its borders without limit.

The next verse reminds us of the mechanism, explained already in 9b-11.

**16 LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.**--Note the 3s pronouns. The increase of the nation results first of all from the salvation of the Gentiles. Here is the fruit of 9b. When the Gentiles see God's judgments, they will turn to him.

### 17-19a, Israel Delivered from Self-Righteousness

**17 Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs;**--Twice before, in the burdens, Isaiah has used the image of a travailing woman. The first time it described the judgment upon Babylon:

Isa 13:8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces *shall be as flames*.

The second time is in the second burden of Babylon, “the burden of the desert of the sea,” describing Isaiah's response to the burden:

Isa 21:3 Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of



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a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing *of it*; I was dismayed at the seeing *of it*.

But this time Israel feels the pain.

**so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.**--The expression “in thy sight” מפניך is often used to express causality, not just “before you,” but “because of you.” They acknowledge that in their suffering, he has not abandoned them, but in fact is in control of the situation.

Isaiah certainly recalls that pain in childbirth was God's judgment on Eve for her sin. Israel's pain in the figurative childbirth here reminds us of her sin. But what sin is in view? Note the focus on their own efforts in v. 18.

**18 We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind;**--First the people confess the painful futility of their own efforts. He compares their condition with an expectant woman:

- The increase that should come through them is like the blessed expectation of a baby.
- But, like childbirth, it is accompanied with great pain and suffering.
- And for too long, it appears to be a false pregnancy, yielding only wind.

Isaiah is not talking about literal childbearing. The nation's fruitless labor is a metaphor for the suffering she has endured by relying on her own strength, yet achieving no results.

As so often in Isaiah, the interpretation follows the metaphor. God expected two results from Israel with regard to the Gentiles. Both are set forth in Deut 20:10-14. She has failed in both regards.

**we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth;**--God entrusted his oracles to Israel, the laws by which he required men to live and the promises of salvation when they failed. They are expected to invite other nations to come under his rule:

Deu 20:10-11 When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.  
11 And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, *that* all the people *that is* found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

Israel has not offered God's peace to the nations. She has not been effective as his evangelist to a fallen world.

**neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.**--The complementary side of Israel's mission was to bring judgment on those who refused to submit to the Lord:

Deu 20:12-13 And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: 13 And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:

Again, Israel has not shown God's judgment against sin, but has entered into alliances with the very nations she should have destroyed. She has only produced generation after generation of corpses, physical death echoing the spiritual morbidity and ineffectiveness of her existence.

Now Isaiah proclaims the end of this morbidity, echoing 25:7, 8.

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**19 Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.**--Again the pronoun shifts from plural to singular. Isaiah confesses that in spite of Israel's failure, God will bring them again from the dead.

It is interesting that he calls them, "Thy dead men." Though they are deceased, yet they belong to God. Compare our Lord's quotation of Exod 3:6 in Matt 22:31, 32,

Mat 22:31-32 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were long dead when God spoke to Moses from the bush, but God still calls himself their God, just as in Isa 26:19 Isaiah insists that deceased Israelites are God's dead men. They still exist in spirit, and God will one day raise them, and Isaiah along with them, from the dead.

The phrasing is repeated from v. 14. The false gods are gone forever, but the people whom God has redeemed to himself will live.

### 19b, Exhortation

Again, Isaiah turns from 2s to 2p pronouns and from statements to an imperative, marking the shift from prayer to exhortation. The exhortation is very brief, and appears to be Isaiah's excited response to the promise of resurrection in 19a.

**Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:**--The "dust" is the destination to which the Lord has consigned the proud of the earth:

Isa 2:10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the **dust**, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

It is what becomes of man's mighty defenses:

Isa 25:12 And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, *and* bring to the ground, *even* to the **dust**.

Isa 26:5 For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, *even* to the ground; he bringeth it *even* to the **dust**.

Israel itself will be thus humbled, but this is not her final destiny. God will raise her from the dead. When she awakens from her deathly slumber, she is to cry out in praise to God.

### 19c, Prayer

Isaiah closes out the song by turning his attention once more to the Lord, marked by the 2s pronoun:

**for thy dew is as the dew of herbs,**--Throughout the summer, the dew is the sole source of water for the crops, and it enables them to grow from the dust. So Isaiah envisions a divine dew falling upon the dead and calling them to life.

**and the earth shall cast out the dead.**--Better, "Upon the earth, upon the dead, **thou** causest it to fall." The Lord is the source of this life-giving anointing.



### **26:20-27:1, Expectation**

Now the song is finished, and Isaiah counsels the listeners to be patient while God's judgment completes its work. The judgment here is not didactic but punitive. God's people no longer rejoice in the salutary lessons it conveys, but hide themselves in the divinely-provided refuge. Note the shift from plural to singular in his address to the people, marking the end of the prayer and distinguishing this section from the exhortation paragraphs.

The section falls into two paragraphs, each introduced by a contrasting motion. In the first, he counsels the "people" to "enter into [their] chambers." In the second, he describes how "the Lord cometh out of his place." We are to withdraw and let him do his work.

**20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.**--When God brings his judgment upon unbelievers, he has two methods of preserving his people. The one recorded here is to provide them a place of sanctuary, to which they may withdraw and find safety. Here are other examples of this principle:

**The Flood:** Gen 7:1, 23 And the LORD said unto Noah, **Come thou** and all thy house **into the ark**; ... 23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, ... and Noah only remained *alive*, and they that *were* with him **in the ark**.

**The Tenth Plague:** Exo 12:22-23 **none of you shall go out at the door of his house** until the morning. 23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come **in unto your houses** to smite *you*.

**Conquest of Jericho:** Jos 2:18-19 Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and **thou shalt bring** thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, **home unto thee**. 19 And it shall be, *that* whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood *shall be* upon his head, and we *will be* guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee **in the house**, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him.

The other provision is to take his people out of the place where judgment is about to fall.

**Sodom:** Gen 19:12-13 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, **bring them out** of this place: 13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

**Babylon:** Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her**, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

In the judgment envisioned here, there is no way to "come out," because it will be universal. So God provides a sanctuary. It would be futile for us to speculate in advance what refuge God may provide for us. But Peter's assurance, derived from the experience of Noah, is our promise:

2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

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**21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place.**--Recall the Lord's declaration in 18:4, warning Damascus and Syria of the coming judgment under Assyria and the political intrigues involving Ethiopia:

18:4 For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place

At that point, the Lord was content to sit back and let events take their course. But now the time has come for him to act, and he emerges from his resting place. His action is marked by the repetition of the verb “punish” פקד. The verb has is often translated “visit” (as in fact it was in v. 14), and has the sense of action that is grounded in first-hand observation of the facts.

The Lord's personal inquisition falls in two directions: upon wicked men, and upon the one who led our race into sin.

**to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity:**--The verdict of Eden, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17), will be fulfilled on all of Adam's descendants. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23).

**the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.**--He concentrates on the sin of murder. Recall 24:5, “they have ... broken the everlasting covenant,” the covenant with Noah that forbids murder.

But it is not only sinful humans who will be punished.

**27:1 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword**—The threefold character of his weapon matches the three titles of the adversary.

**shall punish leviathan the piercing [fleeing] serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.**--Isaiah uses three terms to describe this adversary:

**leviathan** and **dragon** are both names for mythical sea monsters. Their judgment here recalls the only other place they are named together, Ps 74:13, 14,

Psa 74:13-16 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the **dragon**[s] in the waters. 14 Thou brakest the heads of **leviathan** in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.

The reference here is to the deliverance from Egypt (note the reference to dividing the sea, cleaving the fountain and flood). Egypt is depicted as the sea monster (cf. Ezek 29:3). From this correspondence, one would understand v. 1 as predicting the defeat of Israel's enemies as Egypt was once defeated.

But he uses a third name alongside “leviathan” and “dragon.” Twice he calls Leviathan the “**serpent**.” This imagery takes us back to the tempter in Eden, and reminds us that behind the nations of the world are Satan's “principalities and powers.” Compare the dual nature of the adversary in 24:21.

Isa 24:21 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones *that are* on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

The serpent is characterized by two words:

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- “piercing” is better rendered “fleeing,” fast-moving. But he can't get away from the Lord.
- “crooked,” writhing. A snake twists around so that it is hard to seize, but the Lord will destroy it anyway.

The language here echos the Ugartic myths (ANET 138d), endowing the adversary with a certain mystical power. But it is to no avail. In that day, the coming day of the Lord, he will triumph over both the nations and their demonic patrons.