

Thus verses 1-12 describe the devastation of Judah, which the prophet sees as already present, in view of the nation's disobedience to God. In verse 13 he goes on to tell what comes later. As the chapter progresses, his vision is widened to include the ultimate fate of the entire world. Through Isaiah's words God reveals interesting glimpses of remarkable features of His wonderful plan of the ages.

Isaiah 24 is a most remarkable chapter, for it contains a bird's eye view of the plan of God for this age, from the time of Isaiah to the very end of the world.

We noticed that the first half of the chapter is a description of the land of Palestine as it lies in devastation and neglect after the Babylonian conquest. In this chapter, as generally in the prophetic books, the prophet begins with the situations of his own day before going on to speak of future ages. Looking forward to the inevitable result of the sin of the nation, he sees that Israel will be devastated and largely deserted. In verses 1-12 he has given us a pathetic description of this condition.

If verse 13 were the last verse of the chapter, we might readily think it to be merely a reiteration under a different figure of the same thoughts as were expressed in the previous 12 verses. The land is no longer to be like a prosperous olive tree, with much fruit on its branches. Delitzsch aptly says, "The state of matters produced by the catastrophe is like the olive-beating, which recovers the fruit left hanging when the trees were stripped, and like the grape-gleaning after the grape harvest has been fully gathered in." After the exile has begun men are to be scarce; the number of God's people is terribly reduced.

Yet we cannot avoid the impression that the verse contains a suggestion of hope. The land is not to be like an olive tree that has been utterly destroyed, or like a vineyard from which every single grape has been taken. There is a suggestion that something is to remain even after the destruction.

The mention of the olive tree inevitably calls to mind the picture Paul gives in Romans 11:16-27, where he compares God's people to an olive tree. Paul speaks of certain Jewish branches as being broken off from the olive tree, and of wild branches as being grafted in; later, he says, the natural branches will be grafted in again. Paul considers God's